The Nation.

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EDITORIAL

THE FINAL WITNESS

Nearly 500 people were interviewed. More than 250,000 pages of documents were reviewed. Thirty-two witnesses were questioned during forty-one days of hearings. Yet at the end of all that, there is still no credible evidence of what Ronald Reagan knew about the diversion of Iran arms-sale profits to the *contras*. Also unclear is what he knew about the *contra*-aiding exploits of Lieut. Col. Oliver North and the National Security Council staff.

Reagan partisans embraced Rear Adm. John Poindexter's claim that the diversion buck stopped with him, as head of the N.S.C., even though his testimony was not considered credible by many members of the Iran/*contra* Congressional committees. As to whether Reagan was aware of North's *contra* supply network, Reagan has provided contradictory accounts, telling the Tower commission he was uninformed of the N.S.C. efforts and then, months later, proclaiming that *contra* aid had been his idea.

How can the committees determine what information the "presidential mind"—as former chief of staff Donald Regan called it—actually possessed? Call one more witness: Ronald Wilson Reagan. The President has already waived executive privilege by allowing his advisers to testify about their conversations with him. And precedent for a presidential appearance before a committee of Congress can be found in Gerald Ford's testimony before the House subcommittee investigating his pardon of Richard Nixon.

The hearings have shown Reagan to be a hands-on manager of the Iran initiative, overruling Cabinet members' objections and O.K.'ing the deal. Did this management style extend to the profit diversion or—more important—the N.S.C.'s off-the-books war in Central America? Rather than engage in presidential mind reading, the committees ought to go to the source.

THE HART POLL
Victor Navasky

THE FIJI COUP
JoAnn Wypijewski

LETTER FROM TEXAS
Molly Ivins

NORTH'S POPULARITY
Jefferson Morley

PERELMAN'S POISON PEN
Josh Rubins

POLAND'S STALINISTS
Daniel Singer

WHAT'S A 'GOOD AGE'?

LIMITING HEALTH CARE FOR THE OLD

DANIEL CALLAHAN

In October 1986, Dr. Thomas Starzl of Presbyterian University Hospital in Pittsburgh successfully transplanted a liver into a 76-year-old woman, thereby extending to the elderly patient the most technologically sophisticated and expensive kind of medical treatment available (the typical cost of such an operation is more than $200,000). Not long after that, Congress brought organ transplants under Medicare coverage, thus guaranteeing an even greater range of this form of lifesaving care for older age groups.

That is, on its face, the kind of medical progress we usually hail: a triumph of medical technology and a newfound benefit provided by an established health care program. But at the same time those events were taking place, a government campaign for cost containment was under way, with a special focus on health care to the aged under Medicare. It is not hard to understand why. In 1980 people over age 65—11 percent of the population—accounted for 29 percent of the total American health care expenditures of $219.4 billion. By 1986 the elderly accounted for 31 percent of the total expenditures of $450 billion. Annual Medicare costs are projected to rise from $75 billion in 1986 to $114 billion by the year 2000, and that is in current, not inflated, dollars.

Is it sensible, in the face of the rapidly increasing burden of health care costs for the elderly, to press forward with new and expensive ways of extending their lives? Is it possible even to hope to control costs while simultaneously supporting innovative research, which generates new ways

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LETTERS.

ON BOLAND'S LOOPHOLES

Iowa City

In reviewing Phase I of the Iran/*contra* hearings in "The Story So Far" [June 27], David Corn observes that the Democratic committee members have, with few exceptions, been outmaneuvered by their Republican counterparts. Among Democrats, the only members of Congress who could have provided a counterweight to Republican stalwarts like Representative Henry Hyde were sitting on the sidelines. Phase I probably would have been more informative and provocative had the Democrats selected Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Barbara Mikulski to serve on the Senate select committee. Moynihan, in particular, almost surely would have probed fundamental issues of legality and would have brought to bear his considerable intelligence and experience in foreign affairs.

But the real embarrassment for the Democrats in Phase I lay not so much with the selection and performance of committee members as with the "inartful drafting," as Hyde terms it, of the Boland amendment, around which much of the investigation revolves. Republicans Michael DeWine, Orrin Hatch, Hyde and Bill McCollum enjoyed a field day during the questioning of Bretton Sciaroni, the fledgling counsel to the White House Intelligence Oversight Board, whose testimony was all but forgotten in the wake of media coverage for the next witness, Fawn Hall. Yet it was Sciaroni's presence that provided the context for committee members to face their own role as lawmakers. When questioning Sciaroni, DeWine took the opportunity to suggest that the most recent version of the Boland amendment was drafted vaguely because the Democrats knew in advance that the President would have vetoed a measure in which a total ban on U.S. aid to Nicaraguan rebels was clearly stated. In DeWine's view the Boland amendment was a somewhat weak-kneed but clever legislative compromise. Democrats attempted to counter by pointing out that remarks by Edward Boland on the House floor just prior to the vote on the amendment suggested a broadly prohibitive scope, but Sciaroni correctly replied that the language of the amendment itself must be favored over aspects of legislative history when the two are not in full agreement.

A less flattering view of the amendment, implied by Hyde's phrase "inartful drafting," is that Boland and supporters simply failed to word the bill to meet their real intent of stopping all U.S. aid to the *contras*. According to this view, Boland, far from offering a clever compromise that would secure passage, failed to adopt language that would thwart those who might try to flout the intent of the law. Prohibitive lawmaking at its best always requires the lawmaker to adopt the mindset of the criminal and to write language that prevents a legal end-run.

For the sake of the lawmaking process, it is important to find out whether the Boland amendment's apparent inadequacy stemmed from an inability to anticipate the rule's possible subversion or from the necessity of political compromise. Perhaps Representative Boland could share his own recollections on this matter. But aside from legislative history, the interpretive difficulties encountered by the Boland amendment reflect a much larger problem. Regardless of its source, infelicity in Federal legislation abounds and fosters only the kind of disrespect for the law that these hearings so clearly portrayed. If Congress is to preserve respect for the law, it must return to first principles and adopt a mode of behavior that places primary emphasis on lawmaking rather than on fund-raising. The process of drafting and amending legislation requires all the cognitive skills that members of Congress and their aides can muster, quite apart from the related mastery of the political process required to secure passage, and the legislators need more time to perform their lawmaking duties effectively. Perhaps the pending legislation on campaign financing will help. Meanwhile, we can be grateful that in 1787 the framers were not continually distracted from their principal task by the quest for reelection. *William E. Cooper*

UNESCO'S HERITAGE

New Rochelle, N.Y.

I very much enjoyed reading the June 6 InterNation article, "The Heritage Foundation Goes Abroad." However, one misrepresentation should be corrected. The article states: "Heritage also led the attack on Unesco, which culminated when the United States withdrew from the organization, in 1984, followed by Britain a year later."

In fact, the Heritage Foundation became active against Unesco only in late 1981 and early 1982, when it began to circulate numerous pseudoreports and studies, notably damning the organization's support for a New World Information Order.

A much more important but little-talked-about organization that led the battle against Unesco was the World Press Freedom Committee. In spite of a title that pretends at some universality, the W.P.F.C. is made up largely of North American private media interests; it was started with a grant from the Gannett Corporation in 1976.

Throughout the mid-1970s and well into the 1980s, the W.P.F.C., allied with papers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, engaged in a well orchestrated, strident campaign against Unesco and the New Order. Thus not in the 1980s did we first witness a call for U.S. withdrawal from Unesco but in 1978, when a *Times* editorial denounced the organization's support for a Declaration on the Mass Media, very much linked with the New Order debate.

The far-right ideologues of the Heritage Foundation therefore built on a terrain already well prepared. That so much has been said about the Heritage Foundation and so little about the World Press Freedom Committee indicates where our attentions should now be turned. *Colleen Roach*

THUMBS UP

Moab, Utah

There's always something worth reading in *The Nation*, even in the grimmest of its weekly periods, but I've not often come across two essays in a single issue that I found as inspiriting and restorative as these two on June 6: Edward Hoagland's "Up With Spring" and Bill Kauffman's defense of traditional American isolationism—or self-reliance, as I would call it—"Don't Underrate Isolationism." Hitch the two together, like a span of mules, and they read, Up With Spring, Down With Empire. Now there's a war cry you could win elections with.

Edward Abbey

RIDERS ON THE STORM

Brooklyn

Now that the Supreme Court has upheld legislation permitting preventive detention when the public's safety might be put at risk, shouldn't we move on? I suppose I'm not the first to call for indictments, swift arrest and indeterminate preventive detention for Messrs. Reagan, Shultz, Meese, Poindexter, McFarlane, North, Secord and Abrams.

It's important to get these guys off the streets before they kill more Americans and Nicaraguans, fleece the aged of their tax-sheltered savings, commit more civil and tax fraud, violate the Boland amendment again, defy the World Court and suborn the Constitution one more time. By the way, we should let Fawn Hall and Robert Owen out on bail; they're just kids who fell in with the wrong crowd. *Jon Christian Suggs*

AMPLIFICATION

The first sentence of the June 20 cover editorial, "Lying in State," should have read, "It is not merely that Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams lied to Congress about his solicitation of a $10 million donation for the *contras* from the Sultan of Brunei." The intended use of those funds has not been firmly established, and at the time of the solicitation, fund-raising for humanitarian purposes was not proscribed by the Boland amendment.

CORRECTION

Due to a proofreading error, the name of Jim Naureckas was misspelled in the August 1/8 issue.

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EDITORIALS.

Lost Empires

The frantic search for Rent-A-Minesweepers, the desperate dispatch of counterterror squads and the uncoordinated buildup of a naval armada in the Persian Gulf are all symptoms of an American foreign policy in crisis and diplomacy in disarray. Democrats in Congress and dissidents in the press blame the Reagan Administration for overreacting, for incompetence and inconsistency—all true and blameworthy, but somehow beside the point.

For at bottom the policy makers at every level of the U.S. diplomatic establishment have failed to come to grips with the loss of Iran as a client state and surrogate superintendent in the Middle East. And more than that, the powers of the industrialized West have not recognized certain realities of the Third World, namely, that their oil is not automatically ours; their waterways are not our ponds; their revolutions cannot be molded in our image.

The crucial decisions that produced the present dangerous confrontation in the gulf were made years ago, when Iran was transferred to the American sphere of influence, when successive regimes were subverted and manipulated and when, under the Shah, the demands of a brutally exploited and repressed population were ignored (or worse, were con-

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tradicted). It is far too late now to restore the influence or revive the old regime. The revolution that overthrew America's imperial client has turned irrational and destructive, but it is their unreasoning rule this time, not ours. No missiles for "moderates," no guns for use against the revolutionary guards, no cold war shibboleths will put the *ancien régime* together again.

The confrontation policy has so far served only Iranian interests. The clerical fascists in Teheran gain support from U.S. provocations. Unlike the dynastic feudalists whom successive Administrations have courted in the region and who can do what they like, the Iranians rely on a mass base of potential martyrs who are fed a reliable diet of American mistakes and missteps. The reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers and the subsequent offensive maneuvers meant to project U.S. power in the gulf have turned out to be a galvanizing force for the mullahs.

Four decades of self-defeating decisions in Iran cannot be salvaged by a military sail-by in the Strait of Hormuz, no matter how well armed the fleet. Our irrational and destructive government in Washington should see that its real interest lies in a settlement of the gulf war and a halt to the introduction of weapons into the area by foreign powers and superpowers as well as the local belligerents. The war would have withered away long ago without U.S., Israeli, French, British, Chinese and Soviet arms sales. Now that America has, in effect, become a belligerent in the conflict, the slim chances for peace are withering as well.

The Hart Poll

If Gary Hart were to re-enter the race for the Democratic presidential nomination today, he would lead his closest rival by an almost 2-to-1 margin, according to a Gallup poll conducted for *The Nation*.

In a test "election" against the seven candidates who participated in the nationally televised debate held early last month in Houston, Hart captured 25 percent support among Democrats and independents who say they lean toward the Democratic Party. Jesse Jackson was second among those surveyed, with 13 percent, and Paul Simon third, with 6 percent. Albert Gore, Richard Gephardt and Michael Dukakis tied for fourth, with 5 percent each. Joseph Biden was next, with 3 percent, and Bruce Babbitt trailed the field, taking 1 percent. All other candidates collectively drew 5 percent of the vote, and 32 percent of those polled said they were undecided.

The Gallup/*Nation* study surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,026 adults age 18 or older, who were interviewed between July 6 and July 19. The margin for error in such a sample is plus or minus 5 percent.

What are we to make of those results?

They can't be attributed merely to Hart's high name-recognition factor. Indeed, after weeks of headlines about his alleged womanizing, lack of control, poor judgment, lies and dubious character, by the time of the poll his fame had turned to infamy. Surely there comes a moment when a high negative profile does more harm than good, when the benefits of visibility are canceled out by the negatives of notoriety. (Thus Hart's lead over Jackson is down from a margin of 24 percent before the Donna Rice scandal to 12 percent recently.)

A more plausible explanation for poll figures suggesting that a revived Hart candidacy could reclaim enough support to substantially lead the Democratic field is that Hart himself, his entourage and virtually the entire army of so-called experts, editorial writers and other pundits who interpret these matters to the rest of us may have profoundly misjudged something important about our country, our character and the state of public opinion. The continuing support for Hart reflected in the Gallup/*Nation* poll suggests that his post-Rice problem is not so much what the press reported as what it, along with Hart, wrongly assumed: that the voters are unable or unwilling to accommodate themselves to a presidential candidate who violates the conventions of running for public office—in this case, the one that requires him to pretend to be like a character in one of the hundreds of happy nuclear families apotheosized in television sitcoms, a sort of white Bill Cosby.

In fact, of course, the typical nuclear family no longer exists. And the Gallup/*Nation* poll suggests that a large segment of Democratic voters understand this and thus do not regard Hart's philandering, much as they may disapprove of it, as a disqualification for the presidency. Why should that come as a surprise in a culture in which at least 10 percent of the population is gay, 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce, 40 percent have been unfaithful to their spouse, X percent are celibate, however many are unhappily married or otherwise alienated, and in which even some of the happy ones don't care about extramarital affairs?

None of this necessarily means that we have seen the end of America the Repressed, or of the national need for hypocrisy in matters of politicians' sexuality. Nor does it mean that Hart can easily come out of retirement and grab the brass ring (although by combining his status as front-runner in the polls with the symbolic role of underdog in a comeback campaign, he would certainly be in an intriguing position). When he withdrew from the race, Hart said that the focus on his personal life had made it impossible for him to conduct a campaign on the issues he cared about. How could he run against intervention in Central America and in favor of testing *glasnost*, when all the press wanted to know was what he had or hadn't done with a model from Miami and assorted other women in question?

But consider this: What if Hart had confessed to whatever deceptions and infidelities he was guilty of at the time and admitted that he had lied in deference to what are universally regarded as the unspoken rules of national candidacy—but then went on to say that, since he had nothing more to lose or confess, he had decided to conduct a "born again" campaign, not with the object of winning but in which he would tell it like it truly is? And suppose that in addition to his policy positions he then dared to talk openly about the nation's hypocrisy on issues of sexuality, about the iden-

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tification of the politically unacceptable with the morally illicit, about what a serious national family policy would entail (namely, federally funded child care, parental leave, comparable worth, national health insurance and so forth). Such a course might have opened up an unprecedented dialogue on subjects heretofore taboo.

Actually, he could still do it! One can only begin to imagine the lateral consequences of such a development. Would the Naderesque Representative Patricia Schroeder, Hart's past campaign co-chair, who has recently emerged as a candidate in her own right, feel free to go beyond what is thought to be politically possible and talk about what is economically necessary (public ownership of energy resources, for example)? Would the already outspoken Reverend Jackson let PUSH come to shove and give us the fire this time? And how would such surprises expand the moral and political imagination of straight-laced candidates like Dukakis and Simon? Hart could not be expected to win, but after such a—dare one say existential?—campaign, our politics might never be the same.

The real question raised by the Gallup/*Nation* poll goes well beyond any assumptions about attitudes toward Gary Hart, and asks what other unspoken and narrow-minded assumptions limit and otherwise distort our ability to connect public policy to private realities. For example, what inhibitive role does the reflexive fear of Communism, a specter that has haunted American politics since before the Bolshevik revolution, play in presidential politics? Where is it written that a black or a Jew or a woman can't be President? Who says America can't be a superpower without conducting covert activity? For candidates to permit the press, campaign consultants and other purveyors of conventional wisdom to set the parameters of their views on such issues rather than trusting their own deepest instincts impoverishes the national dialogue and underestimates the American character. Until our political culture comes to grips with such matters, our politics, like our prophecies, will be self-fulfilling.

VICTOR NAVASKY

A Mini-C.I.A.

The Reagan Administration asserts that the Boland amendment does not cover the National Security Council because the N.S.C. is not engaged in intelligence activities. Yet in 1981 President Reagan signed Executive Order 12333, which states that the "NSC shall act as the highest Executive Branch entity that provides review of, guidance for, and direction to the conduct of all national foreign intelligence counterintelligence and special activities and attendant policies and programs."

"Special activities" is a euphemism employed for covert operations like those the N.S.C. carried out in support of the *contras*. The order is clear: The N.S.C. is to direct not only intelligence gathering but covert operations as well. That brings it squarely under the Boland amendment as an agency "involved in intelligence activities."

In retrospect it is also clear that authorizing N.S.C. direction of, and deeper involvement in, covert action was one of the purposes of the executive order. President Reagan's directive replaced President Carter's Executive Order 12306. Under the Carter order, the N.S.C. oversaw all national foreign and counterintelligence activities; President Reagan added to its responsibilities the "direction" of "special activities" and "attendant policies and programs."

Other changes made by Reagan in the Carter order are equally important. Under Executive Order 12306, a Special Coordination Committee was to make recommendations to the President on each proposed covert activity. Neither the President nor any of his close personal advisers were on this body. No covert operations could be approved except at a designated meeting attended by the committee's members.

President Reagan, on the other hand, did not activate such a committee. In fact, the only group he set up to oversee covert operations was the National Security Planning Group, and its members include the President and his personal advisers, making it the most powerful body ever created to direct covert operations.

Under the Carter order, the Central Intelligence Agency remained responsible for the conduct of covert operations. Other designated intelligence agencies, excluding the N.S.C., could conduct such operations if the President and the Special Coordination Committee approved. Under Reagan's pronouncement, however, *any* agency—even the Department of Agriculture—may conduct such operations with the President's approval.

The Carter order set forth detailed oversight provisions for timely reporting to the Senate and House Intelligence Committees. The Reagan order makes only perfunctory mention of Congressional oversight, stating simply that

(*Continued on Page 116*)

BUKHARIN REDUX

One of the most important political documents to appear in the Soviet press in decades was published in the July 22 issue of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. Written by journalist and scholar Fyodor Burlatsky, it portrays an imaginary debate between a young follower of Nikolai Bukharin, Stalin's main Politburo opponent in the late 1920s, and a Stalinist. The latter argues for industrializing the country quickly and forcibly; the Bukharinist, whose views are identified with Lenin's venerated "political testament," calls for the continuation of the conciliatory, market-oriented approach of the New Economic Policy. He predicts that Stalin's "Genghis Khan" methods will lead to terror and a "military-bureaucratic" system. The publication of this historical debate is a call for the rehabilitation of Bukharin, whose ideas have been suppressed for sixty years, and shows the determination of Mikhail Gorbachev's radical supporters to dismantle the Stalinist bureaucratic system.

—STEPHEN F. COHEN

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Pundit to Pasture

On Sunday, August 2, James Reston announced he was giving up his *New York Times* column. Life will be the same without him. It was usually hard, at least in recent years, to remember a Reston column for longer than the instant required to shift one's gaze from his ruminations to the other pundits on duty that day. To judge from a couple of recent uncharacteristically sharp outbursts, he did not care for Reagan greatly, but until mountainous evidence compelled him to recognize the futility of such hopes he convinced himself that Reagan would *grow in office*, accept the *inevitability of compromise*, eschew *partisan politics* in favor of *statesmanlike cooperation*, etc., etc.

Reston liked to keep his readers in good spirits with uplifting bulletins on the state of the world. This rosy-cheeked positivism stayed with him to the end, as in his valediction he expressed a confidence that "despite the recent silliness in Washington . . . things here are seldom as good or bad as most people think they are." I don't suppose there has been a day in the past 2,000 years on which Reston would not have been capable of writing those words.

In 1945 persons from *The New York Times* lectured the Board of Education of the City of New York on the role of the press, and their observations were collected in a little book called *The Newspaper*. Reston compared the relationship between the reporter and his audience to that between a doctor and his patients: "The doctor affects the physical well-being of his patients; the reporter affects the mental well-being of his readers; unlike the doctor, the reporter is neither asked nor permitted to prescribe what his readers need to make them 'well.'"

Reston spent his working life—and why not?—advising his readers on how to feel better. At the time he was uttering those bland statements to the Board of Education, Reston was deeply involved in the struggles over the political contours of the postwar world. Along with Walter Lippmann he helped Senator Arthur Vandenberg write his famous speech of January 10, 1945, recanting isolationism, and then, like Lippmann, gave it an ecstatic review without mentioning his own role. He had, however, made a coy gesture to his insider knowledge when, in a dispatch filed the day before the speech, he said, "These proposals are said to have been drafted not in a partisan sense but with the purpose of making clear that the Senate is prepared to favor putting American force behind American principles in the interests of a lasting peace."

The image of the avuncular doctor handing out placebos suits Reston well. He articulated the prejudices and expectations of what Britons once respectfully called the Establishment. When Reston grew shrill—most notably in his abuse of Jesse Jackson in 1984—one could judge that the Establishment was growing shrill too.

"Atlanticism" was the most conspicuous feature of Reston's world picture, as it was of his avatar, Lippmann. Indeed, upkeep of this same Atlanticism, of the "Alliance," has been the central project of postwar Establishment journalism on both sides of the Atlantic, from the early days when Lippmann helped quash any energetic inquiry into the death of George Polk, murdered for his zealous investigations into the behavior of the "Allies" in Greece, to the current period, with feats of propaganda on behalf of NATO performed by John Vinocur, James Markham, Leslie Gelb and Richard Burt.

Now that Reston has gone, Atlanticism won't suffer from inattention any more than it did when that other keeper of the flame, Lippmann, departed. What passes with Reston is the bluff diction of the hedge-school master catechizing his audience on the verities:

What stops at the water's edge?
Politics.
With what must we view?
Concern.
Against what must we guard?
Undue complacency.
What political arts would in the end be preferable to the present chaos?
Those of the smoke-filled room.

Stop the Press Footnote: Simultaneous with news of Reston's retirement came a sensational report from Yossarian Universal news service that social anthropologists from the University of New Hampshire working on a grant from the National Geographic Foundation have apparently uncovered the oldest cache of homilies and platitudes ever found in America.

My own inquiries disclose that evidence from the site, once thought to be the ruins of the Roger Williams School of Journalism, will probably deal a mortal blow to "Lippmannism," the creationist theory of cliché, which holds that 95 percent of all banalities currently in use in major U.S. media originated with the famous pundit and key architect of Wilson's Fourteen Points. In a preliminary review of the cache Professor Beezley Litote noted that on newsprint dating from the early nineteenth century there are mentions of "genuine statesmanship," "a testing of will" and other clichés normally associated with Lippmann. "This proves what we evolutionists have been arguing all along," Professor Litote said in a press briefing. "Our fundamental platitudes have been with us since the birth of the Republic, adapting slowly to changing circumstance."

The Murder of Torrijos

Amid much exulting over U.S. pressure to restore "democracy" in Panama, memory has dimmed entirely on the original charges of Col. Roberto Díaz Herrera, the man whom Gen. Manuel Noriega's troops dragged from his house on July 27. When Díaz first denounced Noriega, he said that the death of Gen. Omar Torrijos, Panama's leader, had been engineered in 1981 by means of a bribe offered by the C.I.A. I was in London at the time, reading Jonathan Steele's report from Washington in *The Guardian* for June 12, which stated:

Colonel Diaz alleged that General Noriega conspired with

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

the head of US Southern Command in Panama, General Wallace Nutting, and with the CIA and others to plant a bomb on General Torrijos's plane. He said Colonel Alberto Purcell, who headed the Panamanian air force in 1981 and is assistant military Chief of Staff now, was paid $250,000 to permit a bomb to be put on the plane which crashed, killing General Torrijos and all on board.

Steele identified Noriega's collusion with the C.I.A. in the murder of Torrijos as a primary "trigger" for the protests that followed Díaz's statement. Readers of *The New York Times* would not have learned that Díaz had implicated General Nutting and, in fact, but for an Associated Press dispatch in *The Times* on June 10, would not know that he had exposed the C.I.A. link; all subsequent *Times* stories have emphasized Díaz's other charges—that Noriega fixed the 1984 elections and ordered the death of his critic Hugo Spadafora—consigning the assassination of Torrijos to the status of footnote. Similarly *The Washington Post* reported the allegation concerning the C.I.A. and General Nutting on June 10 and has been silent on the subject since. On June 12 the paper was describing Díaz's charges as "wide ranging, combining some that appear to be true with others viewed as unfounded," adding that "they touched a nerve among Panamanians who have long suspected Noriega was behind fraud in the 1984 presidential vote and the 1985 murder of Spadafora." But perhaps the most thorough brushoff of Díaz came in *Newsweek*, which on June 22 said, "Indeed, Díaz's own explanation of the alleged bombing was somewhat tortured, implicating U.S. agencies along with Noriega," and followed that with the news that a "Panamanian military official suggested that Díaz was suffering from paranoid delusions."

Thus, Díaz's accusation of U.S. complicity in the murder of a foreign leader, the "trigger" for the current events in Panama, was disposed of without further investigation by the nation's foremost publications.

Ollie's Gang

Tact about some of the uglier aspects of U.S. foreign policy is becoming the norm in many newspapers, not to mention on the networks. Lamentable though the performance of the Iran/*contra* committees has been, their staffs have released a large amount of fascinating material, much of which has been ignored by *The New York Times* and some other major newspapers.

Far more assiduous have been reporters in the Knight-Ridder bureau. On July 26 readers of such Knight-Ridder papers as *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Miami Herald* learned from a lengthy report by Frank Greve and Mark Fazlollah that secret commando units run out of the National Security Council had engaged directly with Sandinista forces inside Nicaraguan territory. Under the supervision of Acting President Oliver North was an Army unit called the Intelligence Support Activity; a Navy group, SEAL Team Six; and a helicopter assault group, Task Force 160. According to Greve and Fazlollah, the I.S.A. and Task Force 160 flew saboteurs inside Nicaragua in 1983 and 1984, and provided machine-gun and rocket cover for these U.S forces against "entrenched Nicaraguan troops." All of this was strenuously denied at the time, with barrages of lies about "unilaterally controlled Latino assets" and similar hokum.

North's secret teams seem to have spent too much time watching *Miami Vice*. Federal investigators questioned the high expenses run up by I.S.A. units and SEAL Team Six, including, in the case of the I.S.A., a Rolls-Royce and hot air balloon acquired from the Drug Enforcement Administration and, in the case of the Navy SEALs, several Mercedes-Benz sedans, acquired "on the ground that they were inconspicuous worldwide." North probably wanted the cars so he could drive to meet Abu Nidal on an equal footing. The toughs from the I.S.A. got depressed at all the probes, and most of them moved over to the C.I.A.'s Paramilitary Ground Force or the Defense Intelligence Agency's Special Actions Section. Others set up companies that then bid for covert-action contracts, thus continuing the privatization of foreign policy.

Another topic on which most U.S. newspapers are being discreet is Cuba's recent charges concerning C.I.A. operations. Cuban television audiences have been enjoying a six-part series on C.I.A. agents operating in Cuba, replete with sneak shots of diplomats lurking at their drop sites and, on one occasion, communicating by lap-top computer to a C.I.A. satellite. Several Cuban double agents, assumed by the C.I.A. to have been assets for many years, have alleged that the agency continued in its preparations to assassinate Castro long after eight admitted C.I.A.-sponsored attempts were reviewed by a 1975 Senate inquiry.

U.S. reporters were invited to question those double agents. Lewis Diuguid's report in *The Washington Post* had no details, but Sam Dillon reported in *The Miami Herald* for July 26 that one such agent, Orlando Argudin, said the C.I.A. had asked him if he knew of anyone suffering from an incurable disease or on the brink of suicide who could get near Castro. Juan Luis Acosta, the captain of a tuna boat who said he was recruited by the C.I.A. in the Canary Islands, claimed that he had been urged by the agency to seek appointment as captain on one of Castro's scuba diving boats and considered this a prelude to an assassination bid.

Of course these allegations could well be Cuban disinformation. Assassination of foreign leaders is against U.S. law, as witness the extraordinary and successful efforts made by U.S. fighter-bomber pilots not to kill Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi in the raid of April 14, 1986.

The World Upside Down

"The dogs were his boon companions—poignant relics of Andy's private life, and the only living things to share his bed." There's a nuance here I'm not sure John Richardson intended in his instructive account of Andy Warhol's house in the July issue of *Vanity Fair*.

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(*Continued From Page 113*)
intelligence agencies shall comply with current statutes.

The Tower commission did not call for legislation to remedy the N.S.C.'s increased involvement with covert operations, finding that the problem was caused by failure to use the procedures already in place. On March 31 Reagan issued National Security Decision Directive 266 barring the N.S.C. staff from engaging in covert operations, but this is not law and can be changed by the President or his successors with a stroke of the pen.

In 1981, when President Reagan signed Executive Order 12333, a number of critics pointed out that it provided a blueprint for increased surveillance and intelligence-gathering directed against domestic political dissent. But few realized that the President was planning to—and did—set up a mini-C.I.A. in the White House.

MICHAEL RATNER AND DAVID LERNER

Michael Ratner is legal director and David Lerner is media director of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

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CALVIN TRILLIN

Americans think of Canada as the place where the cold fronts come down from. Canadians think of America as the place where the acid rain comes up from. This is called free trade. I know that sounds weird to you, but don't worry: I'm going to explain everything.

To improve its image in the United States, Canada spends a lot of money running color advertisements in American magazines on subjects like how hip Toronto is. So you think nice thoughts about Canada all summer (Boy, is that Toronto hip!). Then in December some weatherman, standing in front of his map on the 10 o'clock news, tells you that thanks to a front moving down from Canada it's going to be cold enough tomorrow morning to freeze your socks to your feet. By spring, you're so irritated at Canadian cold fronts that the Canadian government has to spend more money on color advertisements about how good the fishing is in Newfoundland.

Obviously, what the Canadian government should do is take just a little bit of the money it's spending for magazine advertising and pay all of the TV weathermen not to mention Canada in connection with cold fronts, except, of course, in August. I'll bet that's what Mexico did. You don't think so? Then how do you explain the fact that you've never heard any television weathermen talk about a hot front moving up from Mexico? Get with it.

The Canadians probably think that paying off the weathermen would constitute a bribe. They should know better from close observation of the American government: When President Reagan said that he would never pay ransom for American hostages held in Lebanon and then investigators found that he had approved a plan in 1985 to pay $1 million for each hostage, the White House said that the $1 million wasn't ransom because President Reagan said he would never pay ransom. In other words, all the Canadian government has to do is to announce that it never bribes anyone. Then it can pay off the weathermen.

The whole business about weather coming from someplace is silly anyway. You don't think so? Then tell me this: Where does the weather start? I knew you wouldn't know. The answer happens to be LaPorte, Indiana. You think that the weatherman there doesn't get up in front of his map on the 10 o'clock news and talk about the high pressure system coming from somewhere? Don't kid yourself.

Sure, there's another way to go: The Canadian government could take magazine ads saying that cold fronts come from Greenland. Why not? Show me a cold front that's come from Canada and I'll show you a cold front that could very well have been in Greenland the week before. It started in LaPorte anyway.

The only other approach I see is for Canada to deny that there's any such thing as a cold front, which is more or less the approach to acid rain the Reagan Administration took for a few years. Then if the Canadian Prime Minister came to the United States some February and somebody from Buffalo or St. Paul said, "If there's no such thing as a cold front how come my socks are frozen to my feet?" the Prime Minister would simply say, "Beats me."

Finally, of course, the Reagan Administration decided that there was such a thing as acid rain. If there wasn't any such thing as acid rain, after all, what was it that Michael Deaver was taking a lot of money from the Canadian government to lobby for controls on? So you're thinking that by shoveling money in Deaver's direction the Canadians finally got as hip as they're always telling us Toronto is, right? Wrong. In the first place, Deaver got indicted. In the second place, it turns out that other people spent a lot more money than the Canadians did—more money than was spent on any other single lobbying effort last year, in fact—to block legislation that would control acid rain. And what was the name of the crowd lobbying against control of acid rain? It was called The Citizens for Sensible Control of Acid Rain. You didn't guess that? I'm not sure you've really been paying attention.

So the Canadians are back where they started from, after having forgotten a lesson of American politics that a child in Chicago would learn on his father's knee: "A responsible citizen never pays off the wrong alderman." They still get blamed for the cold fronts. We're still sending acid rain their way just as fast as we can get it out of the smokestacks. Pretty soon, at least, they won't have to spend money to advertise the fishing in Newfoundland because there won't be any fish in Newfoundland. Meanwhile, I hope you've learned something.

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ARTICLES.

THE FIJI COUP

Was the U.S. Behind It?

JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

April 12: Timoci Bavadra (medical doctor, political *naïf*) becomes Prime Minister, Fiji, opposing port calls by nuclear-powered, nuclear-weapons-carrying ships.

April 29: Bavadra, in talk with U.S. Ambassador Edward Dillery, expresses anxiety about U.S.A.I.D. official's ties to group bent on destabilizing government.

April 30–May 2: Gen. Vernon Walters (Military Intelligence, Iran 1953, Brazil 1964, Vietnam 1967; C.I.A. 1972-76; private arms "consulting" 1976-81; U.S. ambassador to U.N. 1985-) visits Fiji; meets separately with Bavadra, Foreign Minister Krishna Datt, third-ranking army officer Lieut. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka.

May 14: Rabuka storms Parliament; takes Bavadra wing of government hostage; suspends Constitution.

June 16: Bavadra, in Washington, charges U.S. involvement in coup; urges Congress to investigate.

July 13: Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara (Prime Minister, Fiji, 1970-87, now representative of outlaw regime) travels to Hawaii seeking arms; meets privately with officers from U.S. Pacific Command, CINCPAC.

Like the coral atoll, whose ringed lagoon describes a drowned volcano far below, so the salients of the Fiji coup are best understood as the juttings of a deeper structure. That structure came fleetingly into view on July 7, when the *Fiji Sun* announced that the United States was eyeing properties for a naval and an air base on the country's second-largest island, Vanua Levu. The U.S. Embassy in Fiji denied the report, and by the next day, said the paper's source in the Ministry of Lands, the relevant surveyor's records had disappeared. Thus do the central emotions animating U.S. policy in the Pacific converge in Fiji: nervousness about American assets in the region since the fall of Ferdinand Marcos, and greediness about those assets since the emergence of the nonnuclear movement [see Glenn Alcalay, "Connecting the Dots on the Map," *The Nation*, August 1/8]. As former Ambassador to Fiji William Bodde Jr. said in 1982, "A nuclear-free zone would be unacceptable to the United States given our strategic needs. . . . the United States must do everything possible to counter this movement."

That year 1982 was pivotal. Mara won re-election following a campaign influenced by Fred Eckert, then the U.S. Ambassador to Fiji, and charted by a U.S.-based company, Business International, whose ties with the Central Intelligence Agency had been identified by *The New York Times*. The victorious Mara paid a visit to CINCPAC headquarters and a few months later unilaterally declared that an unenforced statute banning nuclear vessels from Fiji's ports no longer pertained. Soon after, Fiji began to receive American aid—the first South Pacific country to do so—and its soldiers began training in the United States.

It was also in 1982 that William Paupe came to Fiji as director of the Agency for International Development's South Pacific Regional Office. He is a friend of Apisai Tora, the former trade union activist, Cabinet minister under Mara and leader of the rabidly nationalist Taukei movement. Bavadra and his adviser Jim Anthony have accused Paupe, on the basis of Fijian security service reports, of channeling $200,000 to Tora for the purpose of fomenting antigovernment demonstrations and race riots after the elections; others have called Paupe a C.I.A. operative; and the U.S. Embassy has denied all such charges. Paupe's résumé, therefore, is of some interest. He served with A.I.D. in Vietnam from 1966 to 1975, a time when the agency trained Vietnamese intelligence and police forces and operated alongside or in concert with the C.I.A. From 1977 to 1981 he was stationed in South Korea, where A.I.D., through its bankrolling of the Asian American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI), played a supporting role in the repression of labor and the obstruction of democratic opposition. His arrival in Fiji coincided with stepped-up U.S. efforts to stifle antinuclear sentiment in the Pacific Trade Union Forum, a regional consortium of left/liberal trade unions in which the Fijian labor movement is prominent.

According to an exhaustive analysis of the Fiji coup by Owen Wilkes in "Wellington Confidential," a bulletin associated with the New Zealand peace movement, those efforts began with the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s Labor Committee on Pacific Affairs, flagged when the committee's connections to C.I.A. front organizations were exposed by the New Zealand press, and were resuscitated by another A.F.L.-C.I.O. agency, the ubiquitous and equally unsavory AAFLI. In AAFLI we have a paradigm of the confluence of interests that advances U.S. policy throughout the world. Funded by A.I.D. and the National Endowment for Democracy, it is also linked to the American Institute for Free Labor Development, stepchild of the C.I.A. In 1984, AAFLI opened an office in Suva, Fiji's capital, where for the next two years it spent $1 million to defeat a resolution for a nuclear-free Pacific that had been placed before the Pacific Trade Union Forum. That campaign was outlined in an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* based on papers secured under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act. Its job successfully completed, AAFLI closed its Suva office in 1986 and moved to Honolulu. Its current director there, John Sloan, says he was in Fiji during the coup on "regular business."

Like all the players in this story, the National Endowment for Democracy makes more than a cameo appearance. At the time of the coup its patronage took tangible form in a conference on the "meaning of democracy," hosted by the Pacific Democrat Union in the town of Sigatoka, Fiji. The P.D.U., an affiliate of the International Democrat Union, is

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a regional alliance of right-wing parties which last year received $119,962 from the N.E.D. Attending the conference were representatives of the National Republican Institute for International Affairs, a primary recipient of N.E.D. funds. Bavadra has said he believes that "retired" Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, fresh from a stint in the Philippines prepping the right for a dirty war against communism, was also present. Sources in Fiji say they saw Singlaub's name on a hotel register in Sigatoka but that when they returned to photograph it, the register had been replaced by a typewritten list of names, among which Singlaub's did not appear.

If that seems too ham-handed a way to cover compromising tracks, consider the indelicate progress of Ratu Mara in this whole affair. Sometime between April 25 and May 3 he visited CINCPAC headquarters with Paupe and, in an obvious parallel to a similar pilgrimage five years earlier, his return to Fiji was shortly accompanied by a boon to America's nuclear presence in the Pacific, namely the overthrow of a government that had been democratically elected on a pledge to reinstate the very ban on nuclear missiles that Mara had revoked in 1982. The P.D.U. conference, which Mara co-chaired, provided the former Prime Minister with an alibi against complicity in the coup; yet the Sunday before Parliament was seized, Mara was seen playing golf with Rabuka and, reports New Zealand journalist David Robie, two men from the C.I.A. Officially Mara had nothing to do with the coup and expressed surprise from Sigatoka, but protestations of innocence on his behalf are hard to accept given that Mara himself told an Associated Press reporter that he knew and approved of the coup in advance.

All of which brings us to the coup itself. The ten men armed with M-16s who followed Rabuka into Parliament had concealed their faces with ski masks and gas masks. At least some of them had blackened their hands with what appeared to be shoe polish. They never spoke, but gestured to one another using hand signals. Rabuka gave orders only in English, even at moments of extreme tension. The ten hustled their captives into trucks, drove silently with them to army headquarters and there turned them over to Fijian army regulars. Then the ten disappeared. In an interview with Max Watts of 2SER radio in Sydney, the deposed Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Noor Dean, who is also a criminal lawyer, said he is convinced that the men who arrested him and his colleagues were not Fijian. He made that final assessment after observing the body type, movement and comportment of U.S. marines onshore in Sydney.

DRAWINGS BY FRANCES JETTER

From a sharply different angle Jack Terrell, a man intimate with the mercenary "community" (most recently among the *contras*) and now working as a special investigator in the Philippines for the Washington-based International Center for Development Policy, has come to the same conclusion. He told me he believes Rabuka led a squad of mercenaries—at least two of them Americans and two South Africans—acting with a nod from the U.S. government, possibly in the person of Vernon Walters, and brought in on a C-130 SAF Air charter, what he calls "the Southern Air Transport of South Africa." Watts has it from four separate sources in Fiji that one of the ten was Fijian, a Captain Motu; this, says Terrell, is consistent with his theory, since such operations usually include a "pathfinder," or local military person acting as a guide.

Terrell says four C-130s may have been in Fiji around the time of the coup, and here again Dean is instructive. He told Watts that a U.S. C-130 carrying fifteen black American troops landed unannounced and uncleared at Fiji's Nadi International Airport on May 12, two days before the coup. Watts's sources in Fiji have confirmed this with various civil service workers who requested anonymity. When asked at a June 22 press conference in Sydney to confirm or deny that such a plane had landed in Fiji on May 12, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger offered a foggy disclaimer. Asked the same question on July 30, Pentagon spokesman Commander Chris Baumann said: "I don't know anything about it. I can't categorically deny it, but I'd love to."

According to Dean, the plane stayed in Fiji for four days. On June 8, he said, another C-130, carrying about fifty U.S. soldiers, landed at Nausori Airport, eleven miles from Suva, unloaded unspecified "equipment" and left six hours later. Could these troops have been in Fiji as insurance against a possible backlash? Watts reports an interesting exchange between an Australian attorney out for an evening stroll in Sydney and some U.S. marines who were docked there for two weeks at the beginning of June. The easygoing conversation turned to Fiji, upon which one of the men said, "I was briefed—we have all been briefed—on Fiji," and another added: "I am from the Dominican Republic. My country was invaded by American marines, and here I am doing the same thing." Asked to expand on that, the marine said, "No, I am forbidden to talk about this."

Rabuka's operation had been known to only a small core within the military. The head of the army, Brig. Gen. Epeli

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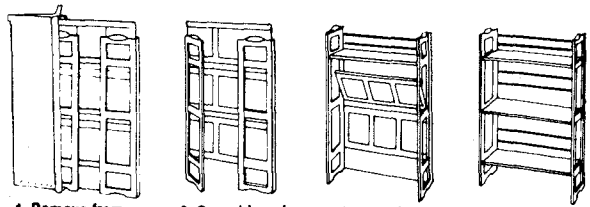

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Nailatikau, was in Australia on May 14 and was stripped of his post at the same time that Bavadra lost his. He has condemned the coup and on June 3 advocated an inquiry to identify "all who outside the R.F.M.F. [Royal Fiji Military Forces] were involved," saying further that "they should be made known to the public not only in Fiji but overseas as well."

And what of the ostensible reason for the coup—racial violence between ethnic Fijians and ethnic Indians, in a country that has a remarkable record of racial cooperation and whose artful Constitution both guaranteed the prominent role of the indigenous chiefs and insured that neither Fijian nor Indo-Fijian members of Parliament alone could amend the Constitution? Apisai Tora has told Watts that he rented sixty to seventy buses at $100 each per day to bring agitators into Suva after Bavadra's election. Those thugs were responsible for the militant demonstrations, the firebombings and the menacing roadblocks that provided a pretext for the coup. They also instigated the vicious riots that broke out six days after it, just as the U.S. press had begun to marvel at the good spirits and general peacefulness that prevailed in this supposed racial hot box.

Where did Tora, who is no aristocrat and whose government salary came to no more than $25,000 a year, get the money to sponsor these activities? Bavadra looks to Paupe; Tora resents the question; Paupe derides the very suggestion of complicity, saying that the only U.S. aid even tangentially beneficial to Tora was a $25,000 grant in 1984 for a community hall in the latter's village of Natalau. A cyclone destroyed the hall last year, says Tora, leaving no trace of it behind. Relief aid poured into Fiji after the storm, and Jim Anthony, who says he never saw evidence of any such hall, suggests that some of that aid went toward the elaborate house in which Tora now lives.

If alarm over a nonnuclear Fiji and its negative ramifications for a new U.S. base indeed prompted the United States to deny Bavadra power, that alarm also worked to the material advantage of the Fijian principals in the coup. Bavadra had campaigned as a champion of the poor as well as of a nonnuclear future, and that class-based aspect of his appeal threatened Mara and his cronies, who had grown rich and corrupt through seventeen years in power. Coincidentally, the land surveyed for the bases lies within the home area of Colonel Rabuka and the Governor General, puppet leader of Fiji's "interim government." Having secured their position on the coattails of U.S. foreign policy, the Fiji elite now collaborate to institutionalize racism by drafting a Constitution that would codify second-class status for Indo-Fijians with the approval of a new Parliament, to be chosen in uncontested elections. The Fiji Embassy in Washington calls this the "path to parliamentary democracy."

Dr. Bavadra understated the case when he asked Congress to investigate possible U.S. involvement in the Fiji coup. With half the U.S. Navy, two-thirds of the Marine Corps and a host of radar tracking stations and testing sites in the Pacific, the United States would be negligent, by the logic of Washington, had it not acted to subvert a country that so meekly challenged its supremacy in the region. Look, over the years, at the casualties of this particular brand of imperialism—the Marshall Islanders, poisoned by radioactive fallout; the people of Kwajalein, robbed of their land and forced, in the manner of apartheid, into stinking poverty for the sake first of missile testing and now of the Star Wars program; the Whitlam government of Australia, destabilized for daring to question the C.I.A.'s lease on Pine Gap; the victims, including Whitlam, of the nefarious Nugan Hand Bank; the people of Palau, forced to the polls eight times for refusing to repudiate their antinuclear Constitution; the Lange government of New Zealand, continually harassed and recently threatened by the same kind of loan scandal that brought down Whitlam. Can anyone imagine that the Bavadra government of Fiji is not among them? □

LETTER FROM TEXAS

The Lege Has a Taxing Session

MOLLY IVINS

Austin, Texas

The State Legislature met for eight months without cease. They made it a felony to disturb bats. Premature release of turkeys is now a Class A misdemeanor. They passed over the frilled dogwinkle to make the lightning whelk the Official State Shell. Failure to emphasize abstinence while teaching sex education is now against the law. But they just couldn't produce a budget. Month after month rolled by. The fiscal year ends August 31 and the state was looking at a $6.5 billion deficit because of the oil crash. There were five hours left in the second special session called and the state was two weeks away from flat broke when they finally vomited it out—the largest tax increase ever passed by a state government, $5.7 billion worth of pure, regressive taxation. You ever watch a bunch of politicians try to raise taxes and cut services drastically at the same time? Looked sort of like a fire-ant hill what's just been hit with a dose of 2,4,5-T.

But the session was not without its charms. In April, Governor Bill Clements was moved to describe the legislators as "a bunch of thumping prairie chickens." So the Senate offered a resolution to make the prairie chicken the Official State Grouse. Lieut. Gov. Bill Hobby said, "The question is on en-Grousement: All in favor signify by thumping once. Opposed, by thumping twice." The senators thumped. "The single-thumpers have it," announced the Lite Guv. Do they have this much fun in Nebraska?

In late April, the Governor went on a seventeen-city tour of Texas to convince the citizenry we didn't need to raise taxes, despite the budget crunch. He flew around the state on a plane christened the Rubber Chicken, in honor of the time he threw such a fowl at an opponent. A Democratic

Molly Ivins is a columnist for the Dallas Times Herald.

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"truth squad" went after him in hot pursuit aboard a plane named the Prairie Chicken. The press trailed after both on the Chicken Little.

Our only Governor, Sweet William we call him, might be described as irascible. Actually, he's mean, bad-tempered and has a face that would sour milk. He's been riled nonstop since January, when the press put him in the middle of the Southern Methodist University football scandal. In August 1985, when he was chair of the board of trustees at S.M.U., Clements ordered the continuation of illegal payments to football players—after the school had already been suspended for same by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. So the N.C.A.A. gave the school the death penalty: killed its football team completely for three years.

The Governor's sole charm used to be the impression people had that he was a straight shooter, a politician who'd say just what was on his mind whether anyone liked it or not. Turns out the man lies like a skunk puts out stink. When asked why he had lied to the N.C.A.A., he snarled, "Well, there was never a Bible in the room."

He ran on a promise of no new taxes, which everyone but the voters knew was a lot of hooey. He waffled as far as allowing that the $2.9 billion in "temporary" taxes passed under the last Governor would have to be made permanent, and there he stuck. He couldn't change his mind without looking like a sackful of fishhooks. Lots of politicians paint themselves into corners by making stupid campaign promises. Bill Clements is one of the few to ever survey the situation and apply a second coat.

Texas Republicans seem to be caught up in the unlikely fantasy that Austin in 1987 is Washington, D.C., in 1980, and they are playing the role of Ronald Reagan, come to slay the dragons of "tax and tax, spend and spend." Turn out the lights and call the law. One thing the Texas Legislature has always been is cheap. And now we don't have enough money to pay attention.

Every day the Lege debated some Sophie's Choice. Should we cut off the program for sick children or should we kick 9,000 old folks out of the nursing homes? Do away with shelters for battered women or the program to help teen-age mothers? We can save the indigent health-care program if we take $35 million out of information services, but that means the Department of Human Services won't have any clerks or computers—we'll have a health care program and no way to enroll people in it. And so on.

The members continued to put on their usual pyrotechnic display of oratorical skill. Representative L.B. Kubiak of Rockdale said during debate on an abortion bill: "You know, in Roman days, the gladiators used to get their men down, their opposition down, and they'd look up to Pharaoh, and they'd look for a signal—give 'em life or give 'em death." You remember Pharaoh, the Roman with his thumb in his ear?

As the House debated a dental-care measure, Representative Fred Agnich of Dallas popped out his false choppers and propped 'em up on the podium at the front mike to remind everyone what subject they were discussing.

The bill to make English the Official State Language came to naught, which is just as well since we'd have had to deport the entire state leadership if it ever passed. Clements, denying that he ever paid football players himself, said, "Absolutely not. That's just repungent to me." He also said he knows the N.C.A.A. has a hard task and he "commensurates" with 'em and he hopes they "secede."

A bill to establish a counseling program for sex offenders in our state prisons caused a testosterone tough-off. Representative Foster Whaley of Pampa won wild applause with a counterproposal to castrate the mothers: he offered to come down and personally demonstrate the correct method to prison officials with his trusty, rusty stock knife. Representative Gerald Geistweidt of Mason suggested we could solve the repeat-offender problem by loosening up handgun controls (of which we have none) "and we'll blow 'em all away."

The usual bleeding hearts were heard from: When the chair of the Human Services Department protested the elimination of programs for the disabled, Representative Mike Toomey of Houston said, "He's just trying to get a

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bunch of people in wheelchairs stirred up."

It appeared to be a tough session for Bubba because the Lege finally scuttled Bubba's God-given right to drive down the highway drinkin' beer. This was clearly the work of a bunch of Communists from New Jersey. True, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) were for it, but the Drunks Against Mad Mothers (DAMM) had them out-lobbied. The new law puts a $200 fine on drinking behind the wheel, but since passengers can still drink legally, Bubba is expected to hand his beer to Bubbette if he sees flashing lights in his rearview. Nor is it illegal for the driver to hold a brew himself, as long as the law doesn't see him actually sippin' on it. "Bubba's not going to mind that. Bubba's smart," said one senator. The Spuds McKenzie amendment, which would have permitted Bubba to pass his cold one to his dawg, was narrowly defeated.

Beyond politics, the S.M.U. football scandal has kept the populace amused. One of the leading characters is a rich Dallas booster named Sherwood Blount, called the Lone Booster because for a long time he was the only one to 'fess up. I suspect him of being a figment of Dan Jenkins's imagination. When the N.C.A.A. finally called Blount to question him about all the money he'd handed out to ballplayers, Blount cussed 'em out, emerged from the meeting and announced that the N.C.A.A. is "a bunch of Communists."

Some improvements were seen in our civic life. For years people have complained because the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners never does anything about incompetent doctors. In January, the board was actually moved to file a complaint against one Dr. Harry M. Ricketts, so egregious was his record of malpractice. The board ordered Dr. Ricketts to show up for a disciplinary hearing. The meeting was canceled after the board learned Dr. Ricketts had been dead for some time.

We continue to soar ahead in the area of criminal justice. In Houston a few months ago, a guy got thirty-five years for heisting a can of Spam. We are all sleeping more soundly at night now that the Spam supply is secure.

I trust you noticed that former Congressman Tom Loeffler of Texas is the Reagan Administration's new point man on Capitol Hill for lobbying on aid to the *contras*. Loeffler, you may recall from an earlier letter [see "Tough as Bob War and Other Stuff," *The Nation*, June 7, 1986], is the guy who thinks you get AIDS through your feet, as we learned when he wore shower caps on his while on a trip to San Francisco, lest he acquire the disease from the bathroom tile. Good luck, Mr. Loeffler, and don't forget your shower caps when you go in to see Congressmen Studds and Frank. □

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PERILS OF 'GOOD INTENTIONS'

The Paradox of North's Popularity

JEFFERSON MORLEY

Oliver North is the latest in a string of pop-culture icons representing the legacy of the Vietnam war in American life. Like the black walls of Washington's Vietnam Memorial, the populist patriotism of Bruce Springsteen and the schematic moralizing of *Platoon*, North is a symbol for a country still struggling to figure out why it was humiliated at war.

North is indeed a "folk hero," though not quite in the sense that the media proclaimed. The general consensus of the media was that North embodied the American character with his patriotism, his straight shooting and, above all, his "good intentions." The folk themselves seemed to view North more ambivalently.

A July 9 *Time* poll found that 77 percent of Americans regarded North as a "scapegoat," more than twice as many as described him as a "national hero." Another poll, by ABC and *The Washington Post*, gave respondents the choice of describing North as a "hero," "victim" or "villain"; 64 percent chose "victim," more than three times as many as chose "hero." North is honored by his supposed enemies in the press, pitied by his supposed admirers in the public.

In the fantasies of the right-wing elite in Washington, North is a hero for escaping the clutches of Congressional Democrats and liberal journalists. But as the adulation of North demonstrates, Congress and the media were disarmed by the lieutenant colonel. North was not the victim of any perfidious leftist cabal.

More plausible than the paranoia of the right is the attitude of the majority of Americans. In the public view, North attracts sympathy for his predicament not for his ideology. As Bill Schneider, a pollster at the American Enterprise Institute, noted, the public regards North as "a good soldier for a bad policy." North is not held ultimately responsible for the Iran/*contra* fiasco; his superiors in Congress and the White House are.

North's appeal is thus populist without necessarily being demagogic or right wing, regardless of his penchant for right-wing demagogy. Americans can identify with the eager recruit who hurls himself into illegalities at the behest of his superiors—and then is called on the carpet by those same superiors. The Congressional mannequins who questioned North and the Presidential actor who fired him are seen as

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avoiding their rightful responsibilities. North's celebrity comes at Reagan's expense.

The ambiguity of North's appeal can be understood only against the background of public opinion on Central America. In 1983 President Reagan made a nationally televised appeal for support of his policy of sending military aid to prop up the government of El Salvador; an ABC/*Washington Post* poll found seven of every ten people opposed. That same year Reagan initiated large-scale military maneuvers in Central America, falsely claiming that they were "the kind we've been holding regularly for years." A Harris poll found 2-to-1 opposition to such maneuvers in both 1983 and 1985. But as with military aid to El Salvador, Congress acquiesced to the Reagan wishes. An unprecedented 21,000 U.S. regular and reserve troops will engage in military exercises in the region in 1987.

The debate over aid to the *contras* exhibits the same dichotomy: popular hesitation and elite support (albeit grudging). The *Los Angeles Times* took the first poll on aid to the *contras* in April 1983. It found the public opposed by a 6-to-1 margin to C.I.A. support for overthrowing the Sandinistas. Four years later, on the eve of North's appearance before the Congressional select committees, opposition to aid to the *contras* was running, according to a Harris poll, at a record high: 74 percent of those asked were against it. In the interim, though, Congress had approved $100 million in *contra* aid.

North has launched the Central America debate into its next phase by dramatically appealing to public opinion and by seeming to succeed. He rallied about one-third of the public to the *contra* cause. His testimony before the Iran/*contra* committees transformed the 2-to-1 public opposition to Reagan's policy to an even split. But the right-wing and liberal pundits who went gaga over this upsurge in support overlooked the fact that Reagan himself had achieved it before. An ABC/*Washington Post* poll had found a similar and temporary level of public approval for the President's Nicaragua policy in June 1986.

As memories of North's television appearances fade, the level of *contra* support also seems to recede. A CBS/*New York Times* poll, taken a week after his appearance, showed 51 percent opposed to supporting the *contras* and 35 percent for it. North's telegenic personality, so similar to Reagan's, had pushed *contra* support to the same high-water mark that the President reached in June 1986—but no higher.

Ironically, North's popularity makes it much harder for *contra* supporters to overlook public opposition to Reagan's policies. That opposition is sometimes dismissed as a regrettable side effect of the Vietnam syndrome. If so, the public shows no sign of getting over this malady, or even of wanting to. The percentage of people who disapprove of U.S. intervention in Central America, pre- and post-North, is similar to the percentage of people who say, in retrospect, that we should have stayed out of Vietnam altogether. This impulse, moreover, is not merely isolationist; it is also anti-interventionist.

In May 1985 a CBS/*New York Times* poll found that 34 percent of the public agreed with Reagan's assertion that Vietnam was a "noble cause." Another 13 percent said the war was "wrong but not immoral." But the largest group, 38 percent, said that the Vietnam war was both "wrong and immoral"—the fundamental premise of the 1960s antiwar movement. Not surprisingly, the same poll found 53 percent opposed to the idea that the United States should help overthrow the Sandinistas. On both Vietnam and Central America, the anti-interventionists are more in the American mainstream than are Ronald Reagan or Oliver North.

There are also those who discount public opinion by pointing out that the American people are ignorant about Central America. As late as March 1985, for example, 23 percent of the public thought Reagan supported the Sandinistas. But part of the public's ignorance may be willful. Reagan, after all, has repeatedly tried to teach the public his point of view on Central America. The students simply don't believe the teacher. An ABC/*Washington Post* poll in March 1985 found 72 percent of respondents opposed to supporting the overthrow of the Sandinistas and only 16 percent favoring that course; it also found a 2-to-1 majority convinced that Reagan wanted to do precisely that. If people assume that

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the President will disregard their views, they may decide to save themselves time and trouble by remaining ignorant of Central America. Ignorance is merely one aspect of a pervasive distrust. That same ABC/*Washington Post* poll found that almost half the public does not believe national leaders when the leaders claim national security is in danger.

This distrust extends to all expressions of the United States' "good intentions" in Central America. The Roosevelt Center, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington, D.C., conducted a series of "focus groups" on Central America in June and July 1986, hoping to probe complex attitudes not captured by the answers to simple poll questions. Among their conclusions: "People care about the deprivation and oppression that plague so many of the inhabitants of Central America, yet they are unprepared to commit U.S. resources for purely altruistic purposes."

Here again North embodies the ambivalence of the American public. Who is more altruistic than North? North was not a smash because he was a stout cold warrior defending the United States from its ruthless adversaries. North, of course, did invoke the Soviet threat, but Reagan had done that twice in nationally televised speeches with no discernible effect on public opinion. North was a smash because he presented himself as a kind of militant liberal, an idealist, a tenderhearted soldier, an apostle of "freedom," the man who was going to do good no matter what an uncaring world thought. The irony of North's celebrity is that he appealed to the waning spirit of American "good intentions."

This in no way implies approval of North's or of Reagan's policies. Quite the contrary. Clearly, the Administration sincerely believed it had only the best of intentions in waging a covert war, breaking the law and deceiving the Congress and the public. If Administration officials hadn't been so sincere, they probably wouldn't have been so brazen. The legitimacy of the Administration's good intentions has now become the heart of the debate about Central America and about U.S. foreign policy in general.

On the one side is the view (sometimes mistakenly labeled "conservative") that places enormous faith in good intentions, at least in those of the Republican President and a group of mostly unelected officials in the national security bureaucracy. Partisans of this position claim that those officials uniquely embody American goodness and that this goodness is the essence of American national will. The task of U.S. foreign policy (it is said) is to insure that this goodness will prevail over any Soviet-backed adversaries.

At home, this energetic elite believes that its own good intentions justify excluding from any influence over foreign policy those Americans who disagree with them. They are the ones who regard the Vietnam Memorial as a "wall of shame" because it does not celebrate our good intentions in Southeast Asia. Oliver North is their new hero.

On the other side are those who came away from the humiliation of Vietnam with a little humility. This mood (and it is still only a mood) does not yet have a champion of North's verve. Those who share the mood are suspicious of U.S. military involvement overseas, not merely because it costs money and may cost American lives but because they

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suspect that the supposedly selfless ambition to do good can be used to justify policies that are morally dubious and politically self-destructive.

This silent majority may well have a certain measure of sympathy for idealistic appeals like North's but it knows better than to succumb to sincere and ambitious plans to "save" a fallen world. As Congress and the President stumble into war, scandal and disgrace while pursuing such unwanted policies, the public may feel a certain vindication. They may come to view themselves as they view Oliver North: as victims and scapegoats of the Washington elite.

The paradox of North's popularity is that it embodies a deep split in American society and therefore suggests that the American people will never support his favorite cause. □

Health Care

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

to spend money? Those are now unavoidable questions. Medicare costs rise at an extraordinary pace, fueled by an increasing number and proportion of the elderly. The fastest-growing age group in the United States is comprised of those over age 85, increasing at a rate of about 10 percent every two years. By the year 2040, it has been projected, the elderly will represent 21 percent of the population and consume 45 percent of all health care expenditures. How can costs of that magnitude be borne?

Anyone who works closely with the elderly recognizes that the present Medicare and Medicaid programs are grossly inadequate in meeting their real and full needs. The system fails most notably in providing decent long-term care and medical care that does not constitute a heavy out-of-pocket drain. Members of minority groups and single or widowed women are particularly disadvantaged. How will it be possible, then, to provide the growing number of elderly with even present levels of care, much less to rid the system of its inadequacies and inequities, and at the same time add expensive new technologies?

The straight answer is that it will be impossible to do all those things and, worse still, it may be harmful even to try. It may be so because of the economic burdens that would impose on younger age groups, and because of the requisite skewing of national social priorities too heavily toward health care. But that suggests to both young and old that the key to a happy old age is good health care, which may not be true.

In the past few years three additional concerns about health care for the aged have surfaced. First, an increasingly large share of health care is going to the elderly rather than to youth. The Federal government, for instance, spends six times as much providing health benefits and other social services to those over 65 as it does to those under 18. And, as the demographer Samuel Preston observed in a provocative address to the Population Association of America in 1984, "Transfers from the working-age population to the elderly are also transfers away from children, since the working ages bear far more responsibility for childrearing than do the elderly."

Preston's address had an immediate impact. The mainline senior-citizen advocacy groups accused Preston of fomenting a war between the generations. But the speech also stimulated Minnesota Senator David Durenberger and others to found Americans for Generational Equity (AGE) to promote debate about the burden on future generations, particularly the Baby Boom cohort, of "our major social insurance programs." Preston's speech and the founding of AGE signaled the outbreak of a struggle over what has come to be called "intergenerational equity," which is now gaining momentum.

The second concern is that the elderly, in dying, consume a disproportionate share of health care costs. "At present," notes Stanford University economist Victor Fuchs, "the United States spends about 1 percent of the gross national product on health care for elderly persons who are in their last year of life. . . . One of the biggest challenges facing policy makers for the rest of this century will be how to strike an appropriate balance between care for the [elderly] dying and health services for the rest of the population."

The third issue is summed up in an observation by Dr. Jerome Avorn of the Harvard Medical School, who wrote in *Daedalus*, "With the exception of the birth-control pill, [most] of the medical-technology interventions developed since the 1950s have their most widespread impact on people who are past their fifties—the further past their fifties, the greater the impact." Many of the techniques in question were not intended for use on the elderly. Kidney dialysis, for example, was developed for those between the ages of 15 and 45. Now some 30 percent of its recipients are over 65.

The validity of those concerns has been vigorously challenged, as has the more general assertion that some form of rationing of health care for the elderly might become necessary. To the charge that old people receive a disproportionate share of resources, the response has been that assistance to them helps every age group: It relieves the young of the burden of care they would otherwise have to bear for elderly parents and, since those young will eventually become old, promises them similar care when they need it. There is no guarantee, moreover, that any cutback in health care for the elderly would result in a transfer of the savings directly to the young. And, some ask, Why should we contemplate restricting care for the elderly when we wastefully spend hundreds of millions on an inflated defense budget?

The assertion that too large a share of funds goes to extending the lives of elderly people who are terminally ill hardly proves that it is an unjust or unreasonable amount. They are, after all, the most in need. As some important studies have shown, it is exceedingly difficult to know that someone is dying; the most expensive patients, it turns out, are those who were expected to live but died. That most new tech-

Daniel Callahan, director of the Hastings Center, is author of the forthcoming Setting Limits: Medical Goals in an Aging Society *(Simon & Schuster), from which this article was adapted.*

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nologies benefit the old more than the young is logical: most of the killer diseases of the young have now been conquered.

There is little incentive for politicians to think about, much less talk about, limits on health care for the aged. As John Rother, director of legislation for the American Association of Retired Persons, has observed, "I think anyone who wasn't a champion of the aged is no longer in Congress." Perhaps also, as Guido Calabresi, dean of the Yale Law School, and his colleague Philip Bobbitt observed in their thoughtful 1978 book *Tragic Choices*, when we are forced to make painful allocation choices, "Evasion, disguise, temporizing . . . [and] averting our eyes enables us to save some lives even when we will not save all."

I believe that we must face this highly troubling issue. Rationing of health care under Medicare is already a fact of life, though rarely labeled as such. The requirement that Medicare recipients pay the first $520 of hospital care costs, the cutoff of reimbursement for care after 60 days and the failure to cover long-term care are nothing other than allocation and cost-saving devices. As sensitive as it is to the senior-citizen vote, the Reagan Administration agreed only grudgingly to support catastrophic health care coverage for the elderly (a benefit that will not help very many of them), and it has already expressed its opposition to the recently passed House version of the bill. It is bound to be far more resistant to long-term health care coverage, as will any administration.

But there are reasons other than the economics to think about health care for the elderly. The coming economic crisis provides a much-needed opportunity to ask some deeper questions. Just what is it that we want medicine to do for us as we age? Other cultures have believed that aging should be accepted, and that it should be in part a time of preparation for death. Our culture seems increasingly to dispute that view, preferring instead, it often seems, to think of aging as hardly more than another disease, to be fought and rejected. Which view is correct?

Let me interject my own opinion. The future goal of medical science should be to improve the quality of old people's lives, not to lengthen them. In its longstanding ambition to forestall death, medicine has reached its last frontier in the care of the aged. Of course children and young adults still die of maladies that are open to potential cure; but the highest proportion of the dying (70 percent) are over 65. If death is ever to be humbled, that is where endless work remains to be done. But however tempting the challenge of that last frontier, medicine should restrain itself. To do otherwise would mean neglecting the needs of other age groups and of the old themselves.

Our culture has worked hard to redefine old age as a time of liberation, not decline, a time of travel, of new ventures in education and self-discovery, of the ever-accessible tennis court or golf course and of delightfully periodic but thankfully brief visits from well-behaved grandchildren. That is, to be sure, an idealized picture, but it arouses hopes that spur medicine to wage an aggressive war against the infirmities of old age. As we have seen, the costs of such a war would be prohibitive. No matter how much is spent the ultimate problem will still remain: people will grow old and die. Worse still, by pretending that old age can be turned into a kind of endless middle age, we rob it of meaning and significance for the elderly.

There is a plausible alternative: a fresh vision of what it means to live a decently long and adequate life, what might be called a "natural life span." Earlier generations accepted the idea that there was a natural life span—the biblical norm of three score and ten captures that notion (even though in fact that was a much longer life span than was typical in ancient times). It is an idea well worth reconsidering and would provide us with a meaningful and realizable goal. Modern medicine and biology have done much, however, to wean us from that kind of thinking. They have insinuated the belief that the average life span is not a natural fact at all, but instead one that is strictly dependent on the state of medical knowledge and skill. And there is much to that belief as a statistical fact: The average life expectancy continues to increase, with no end in sight.

But that is not what I think we ought to mean by a natural life span. We need a notion of a full life that is based on some deeper understanding of human needs and possibilities, not on the state of medical technology or its potential.

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We should think of a natural life span as the achievement of a life that is sufficiently long to take advantage of those opportunities life typically offers and that we ordinarily regard as its prime benefits—loving and "living," raising a family, engaging in work that is satisfying, reading, thinking, cherishing our friends and families. People differ on what might be a full natural life span; my view is that it can be achieved by the late 70s or early 80s.

A longer life does not guarantee a better life. No matter how long medicine enables people to live, death at any time—at age 90 or 100 or 110—would frustrate some possibility, some as-yet-unrealized goal. The easily preventable death of a young child is an outrage. Death from an incurable disease of someone in the prime of young adulthood is a tragedy. But death at an old age, after a long and full life, is simply sad, a part of life itself.

As it confronts aging, medicine should have as its specific goals the averting of premature death, that is, death prior to the completion of a natural life span, and thereafter, the relief of suffering. It should pursue those goals so that the elderly can finish out their years with as little needless pain as possible—and with as much vitality as can be generated in contributing to the welfare of younger age groups and to the community of which they are a part. Above all, the elderly need to have a sense of the meaning and significance of their stage in life, one that is not dependent on economic productivity or physical vigor.

What would medicine oriented toward the relief of suffering rather than the deliberate extension of life be like? We do not have a clear answer to that question, so longstanding, central and persistent has been medicine's preoccupation with the struggle against death. But the hospice movement is providing us with much guidance. It has learned how to distinguish between the relief of suffering and the lengthening of life. Greater control by elderly persons over their own dying—and particularly an enforceable right to refuse aggressive life-extending treatment—is a minimal goal.

What does this have to do with the rising cost of health care for the elderly? Everything. The indefinite extension of life combined with an insatiable ambition to improve the health of the elderly is a recipe for monomania and bottomless spending. It fails to put health in its proper place as only one among many human goods. It fails to accept aging and death as part of the human condition. It fails to present to younger generations a model of wise stewardship.

How might we devise a plan to limit the costs of health care for the aged under public entitlement programs that is fair, humane and sensitive to their special requirements and dignity? Let me suggest three principles to undergird a quest for limits. First, government has a duty, based on our collective social obligations, to help people live out a natural life span but not to help medically extend life beyond that point. Second, government is obliged to develop under its research subsidies, and to pay for under its entitlement programs, only the kind and degree of life-extending technology necessary for medicine to achieve and serve the aim of a natural life span. Third, beyond the point of a natural life span, government should provide only the means necessary for the relief of suffering, not those for life-extending technology.

A system based on those principles would not immediately bring down the cost of care of the elderly; it would add cost. But it would set in place the beginning of a new understanding of old age, one that would admit of eventual stabilization and limits. The elderly will not be served by a belief that only a lack of resources, better financing mechanisms or political power stands between them and the limitations of their bodies. The good of younger age groups will not be served by inspiring in them a desire to live to an old age that maintains the vitality of youth indefinitely, as if old age were nothing but a sign that medicine has failed in its mission. The future of our society will not be served by allowing expenditures on health care for the elderly to escalate endlessly and uncontrollably, fueled by the false altruistic belief that anything less is to deny the elderly their dignity. Nor will it be aided by the pervasive kind of self-serving argument that urges the young to support such a crusade because they will eventually benefit from it also.

We require instead an understanding of the process of aging and death that looks to our obligation to the young and to the future, that recognizes the necessity of limits and the acceptance of decline and death, and that values the old for their age and not for their continuing youthful vitality. In the name of accepting the elderly and repudiating discrimination against them, we have succeeded mainly in pretending that, with enough will and money, the unpleasant part of old age can be abolished. In the name of medical progress we have carried out a relentless war against death and decline, failing to ask in any probing way if that will give us a better society for all. □

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JOSH RUBINS

DON'T TREAD ON ME: The Selected Letters of S.J. Perelman. *Edited by Prudence Crowther. Viking. 372 pp. $19.95.*

Don't Tread on Me is probably the perfect title—an echo with a difference—for this generous, if highly selective, gathering of S.J. Perelman letters. Tread-upon indeed was the wary, infuriated Perelman-figure in innumerable stories and "casuals" and travel pieces, collected in such similarly well-named volumes as *The Rising Gorge*, *Vinegar Puss*, *The Ill-Tempered Clavichord* and *The Road to Miltown*. But, through fifty years and twenty books, not a single Perelman title has hitherto included the personal pronoun. And the difference of that "Me" on the cover serves as a reminder that these letters, and the man who wrote them, should not be confused with the published work, or the persona featured therein.

The superficial resemblance between correspondence and *oeuvre*, after all, can be striking here. Aside from his notable forays into screenwriting (*Monkey Business*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*) and the theater (*One Touch of Venus*, *The Beauty Part*), Perelman's chosen form—notwithstanding pressures to produce a comic novel—was the letterlike *feuilleton*, often using first-person narration, often showcasing a Perelmanic alter ego called Perelman. Furthermore, many of these letters are no less fiendishly stylish or satirically barbed than vintage *New Yorker* Perelman—as suggested by this reply, in *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, to S.J.P.'s evocation of the "grisly charm" of an all plastic Key West motel: "I do owe you a letter in answer to yours from Key West, Florida, dated October 24, 1951," writes Chandler. "And you shouldn't give the stuff away like that when you can sell it, unless of course your letters are just rough notes for articles."

In fact, Perelman's uncommon gift for enraged invective, malicious or otherwise, is on unstinting, surprisingly polished display throughout. There are direct, scathing swats at Malcolm Muggeridge ("a chatterbox all smile and prussic acid, bristling with insincerity"), Dore Schary ("so constipated with his own importance that his smallest pronouncement sounds like Pitt the Elder"), Norman Mailer ("never fails to provide pure horse-cock"), Barbara Walters, David Susskind. Somewhat more rococo devastation is required for Billy Rose and Walter Winchell in their Red-baiting years:

> What the hell happens to these song-pluggers and cabaret operators like Winchell and Rose? Instead of rolling up a snug manure-ball of moola and sitting in Lindy's, spitting cherry cheesecake over each other and slowly festering with paresis, they gotta be philosophers and statesmen. In Rose's case, he also sees himself as an art connoisseur which is doubly emetic.

Masterful, too, are the curve-balls and sideswipes. To Betsy Drake re Mike Todd: "Let me advise you at once that you'd better throw away George Jessel as your standard of all that's most revolting in human behavior." To Bennett Cerf, his publisher, re a forthcoming S.J.P. collection: "Is it true that a mysterious veiled lady has already placed a private advance order for fourteen thousand copies to be bound in crushed Oscar Levant?" To James Thurber re Bennett Cerf: "One of these days when we're not too busy worrying, what say we sneak over to Random House and clap a commode snugly down over his ears?" And after decades of deriding virtually all nationalities while extolling the British, lifelong Anglophile Perelman changes his tune, in 1971, having lived in London for less than a year: "In many ways, they are the most supremely self-satisfied and smug bastards I've ever encountered."

But, though the objects of Perelman's epistolary ire—Hollywood, publishers, bad hotels, television, all forms of pomposity—frequently turn up in his stories, these semiprivate outpourings of flavorsome disdain are virtually never "rough notes for articles." Naked everyday anger, Perelman knew, had no place in the world of his humor, was useless as literary material. Writing in 1955 to Leila Hadley, one of several quasi-romantic pen pals, he quotes at length from a *New York Times Book Review* interview with best-selling novelist Robert Ruark, a "bloated pipsqueak" who postures in excruciating Hemingwayese. Yet "the extract above so infuriates me that I've been unable to do a piece on it." Similarly, a few months later, after detailing the lunatic *Around the World* temper tantrums of that "psychopathic little bastard" Mike Todd, Perelman adds: "Perhaps one day, when I've cooled off sufficiently, I can use a portion of all this as copy."

Let's not be misled, then, by the brilliant crackle of the put-downs and gripings in these letters: though occasionally uproarious, this sour grievance-collecting is not the stuff of true Perelman comedy—where anger is purified and aerated, celebrated and defused. In a typical Perelman piece, the victimized, curmudgeonly S.J.P. is himself a figure of fun. Umbrage is drained of all self-righteousness. (This partly explains why Perelman—despite vividly expressed loathing for, among others, "this everlasting nudnick" Richard Nixon—steered clear of political satire, which requires a pedal point of righteous indignation.) At the same time, the petty affronts and tiny outrages, the exquisite offenses to sensibility, are given an epic, distinctly uncozy dimension—through Perelman's leaps into surreal whimsy and blithely subversive language. Compare, for example, any of the travel letters here, with their amusingly bitter yet earthbound, literal complaints, to "Paris on Five Dolors a Day" (in *Eastward Ha!*), which begins as President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing plots with his ministers for the sabotaged arrival of S.J.P. in France: "Is all in readiness, then, to welcome back that acclaimed boulevardier, *Feinschmecker*, and Yankee globe-trotter which he is without peer in this century if one overlook Wilfred Thesiger, Henri de Monfried, and Freya Stark?" In the very best Perelman stories, moreover, the grandiloquent fury of a puny fellow in a minor misadventure provides not just social satire but something elemental and darkly comic as well: a deglamorizing metaphor for mankind's existential snit.

You won't find much infectious fancy or existential resonance in the undiluted—

Josh Rubins is a frequent contributor to The New York Review of Books.

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if often zesty—bile that runs thickly through these letters. But that discovery, though on a sentimental level disheartening, merely enhances Perelman's accomplishment: the transformation of garden-variety bitterness into buoyant, oddly cheering tales, parodies and playlets. (Only in a few of the pieces from the 1970s does the sourness bleed through obtrusively.) So it's hardly surprising that the crafting of each piece remained an ordeal throughout Perelman's life—a life in which, according to several reports (Dorothy Herrmann's mediocre 1986 biography above all) and the evidence of these selected letters, an overactive spleen was compounded (or caused) by depression, frustration and insecurity.

Not that the private Perelman was entirely without high spirits, charm or warmth. Prudence Crowther, a young humor writer who was Perelman's close friend during his last months (he died in 1979), found him—as did other friends—modest, enthusiastic, quirkily romantic, "dazzling company." She also recalls, in the appealing introduction to this collection, that Perelman spoke of his wife, Laura, who died in 1970, "infrequently but easily, with deference and affection." Most important of all, Crowther reveals that her choice of letters was limited by uncooperative correspondents, that many large and small cuts have been made, that "to gain the cooperation of certain correspondents I have acceded to some editing by other hands." And one of the results, we're told, is that "tenderness . . . gets short shrift" in these letters—though Perelman's fond attachment to such old friends as Ogden Nash, Frances and Albert Hackett, Ruth and Augustus Goetz, even Lillian Hellman (whose foibles are memorably catalogued) does come across with heartfelt vigor.

Still, as Crowther acknowledges, "the letters do not describe a happy life." In 1964, after some thirty-seven years of marriage, Perelman writes that "monogamy is at best a very shaky and provisional arrangement invented by some rather smelly monks for the purpose of preventing the extinction of the race." The death of his best friend, Laura's brother Nathanael West, in a 1940 car crash, is mentioned only in a short, formal note. As for fatherhood: "We've tried giving him [baby Adam, 4 months old] nicotine and beating him around the head and ears with rubber hammers, but he still keeps growing"—a jape that would carry no lingering reverberations were it not for the fact that Adam (who had a troubled youth) is rarely alluded to again, and not at all after age 15. (Daughter Abby receives slightly more attention.) Nor, despite over forty years of association, did Perelman find—as did Thurber and other grumpy sorts—a snug alternative home at *The New Yorker*. In February 1957, after months of quivering with anger "at their august editorial decisions, their fussy little changes and pipsqueak variations on my copy," he yearns for "some status whereby their acceptance or rejection of a piece wouldn't be a life-and-death matter"; but, in Perelman's own mind at least, that status never came, leaving him vulnerable to all the Sisyphean tortures of the freelance writer's anxious grind. (From 1971: "The final piece I wrote for the *New Yorker* series was okayed, which really lifted a millstone from my spirits. . . . I can't convey the relief I felt, for the effort of writing it and the length of time it had taken just about destroyed my faith in myself.") Even Perelman's escapes—travel, long-distance flirtations—seem to involve sparse rewards for uncommon effort, though here too the letters, which have been cleansed, one gathers, of considerable ribaldry, may not fairly represent the textures of experience.

There's nothing like a posthumous Selected Letters for encouraging glib wrap-ups, Olympian pigeonholings, of a writer's life and work. And it would be relatively easy to fashion a connect-the-dots study in neurosis from the gloomy hints and sporadic outbursts, the chilly spaces between the ellipses. But if all this life-sized malaise and disappointment may suggest what fueled Perelman's comedy, these selected letters (like Herrmann's biography) don't even begin to explain the alchemy by which he converted small-scale alienation into universal high dudgeon—universal enough, at any rate, to enrapture such an unlikely reader as Eudora Welty. Reviewing *Baby, It's Cold Inside* on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review* in 1970, she wrote: "Back of some of these pieces, and not very far, lies deep sadness, lies outrage. What an achievement Mr. S.J. Perelman makes today, that out of our sadness and outrage we are brought, in these little leaves, to laugh at ourselves once more." The sadness and outrage have now been brought up front, been made grimly (and sometimes entertainingly) specific; the achievement remains immense and mysterious. □

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The Apparatchiks

DANIEL SINGER

"THEM": Stalin's Polish Puppets. *By Teresa Toranska. Translated by Agnieszka Kolakowska. Harper & Row. 384 pp. $22.95.*

What price is Poland paying for its Stalinist heritage? In 1981, during the heyday of Solidarity when everybody was looking at the present or, with fingers crossed, to the future, Teresa Toranska, a bright and persistent young Polish journalist, decided to probe her country's recent past. For four years she interviewed as many surviving leaders of Poland's first postwar decade as would agree to talk to her. It was high time for such a project since her potential subjects were already in their seventies or early eighties. The resulting book, originally commissioned by an official Polish publisher who eventually decided against issuing it, became a *samizdat* best seller in Poland. It has now appeared in the United States in a slightly abridged version consisting of five interviews. Among these are lengthy dialogues with Edward Ochab, who, after a long Stalinist period, presided in October 1956 over the transfer of power to the rehabilitated Wladyslaw Gomulka; with Stefan Staszewski, who, as party boss for the Warsaw region, also played a role in that "Spring in October"; and, last but not least, with Jakub Berman, who, as the man in charge of ideology and security, was one of the ruling Troika (together with Boleslaw Bierut, the party chief, and Hilary Minc, the economist) in the worst years of the Moscow-sponsored dictatorship.

European reviewers of the book have emphasized either its spicy details—Berman dancing with Vyacheslav Molotov in front of a smiling Stalin at one of his late-night parties—or its trivial ones—the brief portrait of Julia Minc, a bigoted and unrepentant old woman who figures in the book in part because she was the economist's widow and also because she describes how "they," the rulers, lived in relatively privileged but almost total isolation. But the book is far more interesting than such details can suggest. It contains much valuable material for future historians—notably on China's role in the 1956 crisis, on Russian methods of control, on Khrushchev's attitude toward anti-Semitism and especially on the thinking of Poland's nominal leaders, so mighty and yet so powerless. Indeed, the book contains all the ingredients of a major tragedy, although the reader does have to be aware of certain of its biases and limitations.

The first point to be clarified is that "them" should not be taken as an anti-Semitic reference even though four out of the five people interviewed here happen to be Jewish. It is true that the 3.5 million or so Jews in prewar Poland were an oppressed minority and that many of them were naturally attracted to socialism's idea of universal social justice. After Hitler's holocaust, Poland's Jewish community had almost vanished, but many of the leaders who arrived from exile in Russia, where racism had not been a key criterion in Stalin's purging of the Polish Communist Party, were Jewish. Nevertheless, the ratio of four Jews to one non-Jew in Toranska's sample is accidental. Some of the leaders had died. Many more—Gomulka, Stanislaw Radkiewicz (the Minister of Security) and General Mieczyslaw Moczar—refused to talk.

There are people in the States, as in Poland, who will read a great deal into this accidental figure. Those who dislike "Reds" and stress the names of Minc or Berman are cousins of people who curse capitalism and speak only of the Rothschilds never of the Rockefellers. I can guarantee that Teresa Toranska is not one of them, but I did warn her on reading the manuscript that this point should be clarified when presenting the text to the Western public. Those responsible for the American introduction might have explained it in a couple of paragraphs instead of arguing, for instance, inaccurately and with a degree of snobbish arrogance, that if the language in the book sounded stilted it was partly because the people interviewed lacked formal education. The snag with Berman, a law graduate and Ph.D. in social science, was his Stalinism, not his absence of education, formal or otherwise.

The other almost inevitable bias in the book brings us closer to the heart of the drama. For Toranska's generation, socialism is identified with the Soviet tank and with a domestic leadership entirely divorced from the people. No wonder that her generation tends to idealize Western capitalism and Poland's prewar

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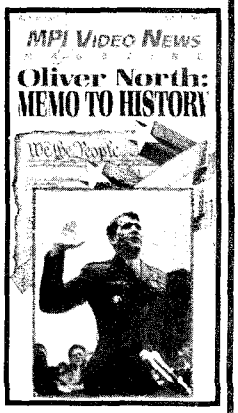

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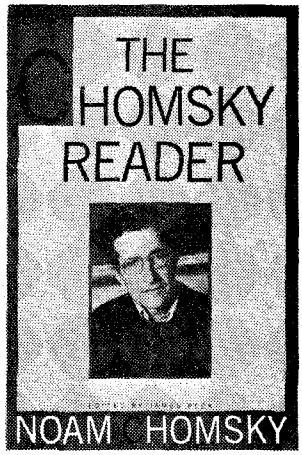

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regime of Pilsudski and his colonels. The avuncular Ochab occasionally reminds his aggressive interrogator that the Russians were also liberators, the main victors over Nazism, and that if the new regime in Poland committed crimes, its opponents from the underground were no angels either.

Indeed, if you look at the potted biographies introducing each chapter, you will discover that most of the protagonists had spent at least as many years in jail as a Kuron or a Michnik now. It was no picnic to be a Communist in prewar Poland. Neither were the future rulers, at least to begin with, mere timeservers. Mostly children of the middle classes, they were originally "going to the people" in order to change the world and were ready to take serious personal risks for that purpose. To complicate the matter still further, by the time they were back in Poland as proxy rulers driven home by the Red Army, they could no longer have had many illusions about the nature of the Soviet regime. "We're all survivors, people Stalin didn't manage to kill off in time—the third set of KPP [Polish Communist Party] cadres," Roman Werfel, formerly one of the party's chief ideologists, admitted quite candidly. Some of them had very direct experience of the blessings of the workers' paradise: for instance, Stefan Staszewski—the only one to recant and who, somehow, sounds the most unpleasant—spent eight years in Kolyma, one of the worst Soviet labor camps; Stalin had his brother killed.

Yet these people did not hesitate in their course of action at the end of the war. History was on their side and Stalin was their prophet. Did they genuinely believe that they would avoid the major Soviet mistakes? In the early postwar period, they, like many others, may have thought so, but that illusion did not survive the cold war. In any case, they were masters only in name. Admittedly, they managed to avoid the staging of Moscow-type trials in Poland. But they never tried, or even thought of trying, to alter substantially the imported Soviet model. Whatever their original motives and intentions, they had become true believers, Stalin's faithful and obedient servants.

Jakub Berman perfectly illustrates the mentality of such an *apparatchik*. Challenged by Toranska, he does not answer in the language of socialist democracy. How could he? His fundamental case rests on *Realpolitik* and geography. We had chosen the right side, he argues, the only one historically valid. Had we chosen otherwise, Poland would have been reduced to the role of a "Duchy of Warsaw, a truncated scrap, a mean pathetic little Central European state." And if this imported revolution from above did not take root among the working people, it is entirely the people's fault, a weakness that will be cured by time. No matter if centuries are required for the purpose.

If the Polish leaders had really argued in terms of class links transcending frontiers, and not of subordination to Russia conceived as the "Socialist fatherland," they could have invoked the name of Rosa Luxemburg. They did not because, fundamentally, that great revolutionary was anathema to them. Her conception of democracy was exactly the reverse of theirs. Where she had maintained that the "errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee," their basic premise was and is that the mistakes of a politburo are always preferable to the "active, untramelled, energetic political life of the broadest masses of the people." Berman does not seem to have asked himself why a decent young woman like Teresa Toranska, who would certainly have belonged to the left in prewar Poland, was asking him so aggressively, not "What have you done with socialism?" but "What have you done with my country?"

The price Poland paid for an imported revolution is still to be fully measured. The damage done to socialism as an attractive idea is obvious. At the very time the aged Berman was beginning to plead his case—he died in 1984—the Polish workers were in revolt against "them," or to be more precise, against their ideologically utterly empty successors. In the role they were playing the workers of Gdansk and the millions rallying around Solidarity were straight out of a Marxist textbook. But their language was not that of socialism. Indeed, if they spoke socialism at all, of self-management and workers' control over their own fate, they were, like Molière's M. Jourdain, unaware that they were doing so.

True, the complicated story of postwar Poland is far from finished and future historians will have to draw the final balance sheet. It will require, however, a great playwright to convey the drama not just of a few leaders, but of a whole generation which set out dreaming

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of changing the world, of dominating fate, and which ended as fate's cruel plaything. It will require a great dramatist to bring to life the Stalinist tragedy for which Teresa Toranska's book provides so many fascinating ingredients. □

THEATER.

THOMAS M. DISCH

1984
Beirut

If Verdi were still alive, he would long since have made an opera out of *1984*. Like the Hugo- and Schiller-derived plots of *Ernani, Rigoletto, I Masnadieri* and *Don Carlos*, *1984* uses the conventional narrative ligature of a doomed romance as the basis for an antitotalitarian parable. At the simplest level this formula allows the audience the respite of a few love songs before the iron heel of power resumes its usual practice of crushing the human face forever. Beyond that, it is up to the genius of the musical dramatist to cross-reference sexual politics with power politics so that the love story is more than a decorative appurtenance of the plot. Just as it stands—and as it is staged by the Wilma Theater of Philadelphia in the production imported to the Joyce Theater in New York City by the American Theater Exchange—this adaption by Pavel Kohout, translated by Michael Ladenson and the director Jiri Zizka, would serve quite well as a ready-to-set libretto, all the dialogue having been pared to its verbal minimum and ordered neatly into recitatives, arias, duets and choruses. The first scene even duplicates the same ploy Menotti used last year in *Goya*, of having a noisy chorus suddenly revert to dumb show as a way of switching us into the hero's alienated viewpoint. Zizka must make do without Verdi, but even so he underscores all his big moments with the maximum available musical voltage: a blues ballad for the prole washerwoman (sung with feeling by Leata Galloway); traditional horror-movie screechings and scratchings for the torture scenes; and borrowed chunks of a familiar piano concerto when it's needful to signal that large emotions are at issue.

The set by Phillip Graneto takes the form of two ornamental heaps of metal debris on either side of the stage (like larval versions of the giant junk assemblages in *Les Misérables*), framing a hivelike back-projection screen that is used, as per Orwell's stage directions, to indicate the omnipresence of Big Brother, and also as a narrative convenience for prefilmed flashbacks. The perfunctory nature of Michael Bailey's cinematography is one of the few elements in which the production reveals its budgetary constraints. Otherwise, *1984* has the decorous and decorative air of a night at the opera, where a certain minimum amount of fuss and money has to be lavished in deference to the Mammon of Masterpiece Status.

Orwell's plot line is faithfully adhered to, and his language survives the double sea change into and back from Czech with remarkable durability. Despite a tentative effort to transpose the story to an American anywhere, the citizens of Oceania still pledge allegiance to Ingsoc (English Socialism) and hark back to a past specific to London. Once or twice the script admits obscenities denied to Orwell, but these and other cosmetic efforts to update the text only underline the respect in which *1984* has become a period piece that bears an ever-more tangential relationship to the known horrors of post-1948 history.

Parables may be timeless, but satire that is not specific to the historical moment is apt to register as bromidic. Kohout's script and Zizka's direction, accordingly, de-emphasize those aspects of Orwell's vision that represented the inverted realities of 1948 and concentrate on *1984: The Eternal Legend*. The theatrical know-how they bring to bear is impressive, and one can see why the American Theater Exchange would want to showcase the production after it had been a guest at the Kennedy Center in Washington. Like a well-mounted, well-sung opera, *1984* is an irreproachable theater piece, and if it fails, finally, to connect at gut level, that can be ascribed in part to its faithfulness to an overfamiliar original and in part to a lack of charismatic performances in the three leading roles. John Shepard, as Winston Smith, is a serviceable tenor, best when he has to be loudest, as in the final torture scene, but unconvincing in his love duets with Julia. Frances Fisher, as Julia, is up against the basic soprano problem of having to create a sense of character without ever stepping down from a pedestal of Earth Mother virtue. She is all radiant red hair and nurturing bared bosom, but when the menfolk talk politics she's somewhere else. (Sorry,

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ladies, but that's how it was in *1984*.) Evan Thompson, in the crucial baritone role of the inquisitorial O'Brien, is as stiff and perfunctory as the Metropolitan Opera's own Sherill Milnes. In a role that demands Iago-ish villainy Thompson merely glowers, and his stiffness provokes Zizka to make his one glaring choreographic mistake, when, trying to make action do duty for menace, he has Winston, in the torture scene, whisked about the stage on a wheeled stretcher by the assistant torturers. For one crucial moment the director fails to heed the unheard melodies of his imaginary composer, and suddenly we can all hear the groaning of the stage machinery.

Alan Bowne's one-act *Beirut*, at the Westside Arts Theatre in New York City, does for AIDS what Verdi's *Traviata* did for tuberculosis. Earlier plays about AIDS, while they have drawn a curtain around the disease's worst physiological horrors, have nevertheless conveyed a sense that it is an affliction without "redeeming" merit. In *Beirut* it is the sword interposed between two ardent, heterosexual lovers that allows their passion to progress from simmer to boil. The story could not be simpler. Torch, a young Brooklyn hunk of the near future, has been incarcerated in a palatial dungeon on Manhattan's Lower East Side (a beautiful bare set by Elizabeth Doyle), one of unseen thousands or millions who have been quarantined in ABCville for testing positive as AIDS carriers. He is visited by Blue, a woman whose physical charms are equal to his own. She has escaped into Torch's prison via the F.D.R. Drive in order to share his fate and, if she can, his bed. We are allowed to witness them in various states of undress and desire, until at last the unconquerable force of Eros commands the spotlights to fade on what we always knew love would ordain.

Michael David Morrison and Laura San Giacomo as the young lovers make a great adagio team. Their New York accents and body English are equally impeccable, and if Jimmy Bohr's duties as a director involved anything more than letting nature take its course, you'd never know it. Watching *1984*, all you could think of was Zizka pumping significance into the tired text. Bohr's art is almost as invisible as that of Walker Hicklin, who designed the costumes: for him, jockey shorts; for her, a bra and panties. The dialogue passes muster, though only refugees from the 1950s are liable to become excited by its reputed rawness. (However, I did hear one such refugee as I left the theater declare contentedly that he had been "deeply offended," so if that's what you're into, it will probably do the trick.) But the dialogue could almost be dispensed with without harm to the drama. *Beirut* would work just as well as a ballet.

What does *Beirut* say about AIDS? Chiefly, that it is one hell of a dramatic dilemma, in which straights should be allowed to participate on an equal imaginative basis with gays. Which seems fair to me. Once a writer friend of mine who'd spent the better part of his adult life in San Quentin told me that, like many other writers who knew prison life only by report, I suffered from a case of "penal envy." He assured me that was nothing to be ashamed of. Indeed, to imagine oneself into dire situations is perhaps the beginning of effective charity. *Beirut*'s success (one-act plays are rarely produced—and promoted—so lavishly) must be viewed, however ironically, as a tribute to the community of the haves by their more fortunate well-wishers, the have-nots. □

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ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Cindy Sherman

Though the works of Cindy Sherman must be classed as photographs, and depend for their effect in part on the fact that they are photographs, photography is not her medium. It is, rather, a means to her artistic ends. Her medium is herself. But that is not to say that she is her own subject, for the photographs are of her only in the reduced sense in which Delacroix's *Liberty Storming the Barricades* is of the model who posed for Liberty. The knowledge that they are of Cindy Sherman penetrates our experience and appreciation of these works, but she herself is not what the works are about. They are about whatever she, as her own medium of representation, has transformed her face, her body, her costume and her surroundings, to show. She uses herself to achieve an illusion, and the chief contribution photography makes is through its connotations as documentary. The standard photographic situation, however flaunted by artists, is that of a picture which represents its cause by looking like it. The premise of photography is that it is a pictorial record, its image steeped in the visual reality that occasioned it. In Sherman's art, this premise is exploited to enhance the illusion at which it aims.

The illusion in any given picture is importantly limited by the knowledge, these days widely shared, that whatever they may be about, all her pictures are of her. Sherman's face must by now be the second most widely known face in the art world, despite its happy indistinction. She is surpassed in familiarity only by Warhol. Her intentions nevertheless differ from Warhol's almost completely. Warhol meant his own face to be among the images that define our cultural reality, of a piece and on a plane with the Campbell's soup label, the Brillo carton, Mona Lisa and of course the faces of Liz, Elvis, Jackie and Marilyn. Like Washington and Lincoln—or Nixon—but not Fillmore, Polk or Harding, these are the shared icons of contemporary American culture, and it is something of a miracle of publicity and promotion that an Andy is as instantly recognized as a Raggedy Ann by the otherwise artistically illiterate. Sher-

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man, because her impulses are those of an actress and not the ambitions of a star, aspires to be known for her roles rather than her personality. She is aided in her anonymity by the circumstance of being a *femme moyenne sensuelle*, with a standard decent figure and a not unattractive face, but subject to cosmetic modifications that are the right of Western women: lipstick, eyeshadow, hair coloring and of course the semiotics of feminine dress. Even so, the knowledge that we are seeing her, whatever the final content of the picture, limits the degree that we can enter the illusion, however compelling. We know, in brief, that we are looking at art and not a transcription through photography of the real world.

This limit is linked, internally and I would say paradoxically, with another one, which goes in the opposite direction. If all you were to see were a single work of Sherman's, you would have no way of knowing that photography in her case was not a means but an end—no way of knowing that it was not just an arty kind of photograph, a bit big for its subject, perhaps. The subject might, for instance, be just a nice healthy-looking girl, Sherman herself being minimally displaced to represent someone's girlfriend, sporty and cheerful, smiling brightly. Told that it *is* Cindy Sherman and *by* Cindy Sherman, one would spontaneously class it as a self-portrait and wonder, dimly, why it was included in the show. The fact that its being by her does not entail that she took the picture, and that it is of her does not mean that it is a portrait, are invisible relevant facts about such a picture. It is only when one has come to see more and more of her work that one recognizes that the two salient facts—that it is a photograph and that it is of her always—must be transcended if we are to understand any work of hers. She is the medium through which the subject is made visible. And it—photography—is the medium that makes the illusion palpable. So the works gain when seen as part of a project, as referring to one another in a way underscored by the fact that each of them is titled "Untitled" and given a number. Because it is the total project, one of the most arresting artistic achievements of this decade, that is the least artistic unit of her work, only the large one-person exhibition is a suitable format for coming to terms with it. I have always felt that showing two or three of her works in, say, the Whitney Biennial, is deeply unsatisfactory and misleading. By being photographs, they are falsely contrasted with the paintings and falsely bracketed with the other photographs. Since any given picture draws a measure of its energy and meaning from the evolving project, the wonderful exhibition of more than eighty of her works on the second floor of the Whitney Museum of American Art (until October 4) affords a spectacular experience of inspired imagination and visual daring and moral depth. Before addressing some of the imagery in detail, however, I want to dwell on the paradox that gives a tension to the total project and a special conceptual vibrancy to the individual works.

The paradox is that the wider knowledge of her *oeuvre* greatly enriches the artistic experience of each of its components, but it at the same time severely inhibits the degree that we can fully enter the illusion to which each work aspires: one knows, finally, that it is just Cindy Sherman, gotten up to be X or Y or Z, so that what we see is Cindy Sherman *as*. It is as though one aim must be paid for at the cost of sacrificing the other: the illusion works best in those who misperceive the work. And this may be a heavy price if I am right in classifying Sherman as basically a performance artist. The art of the performance artist undertakes the transformation of the viewer through the transformation of the artist. Now, we can be transformed only if the illusion is achieved, which means that we are subject to transformation only if we stop seeing the artist as (just) the artist. My own view is that Sherman in her best work overcomes the paradox, or even that she uses the paradox to achieve her effects—among the rare successes, if I am right, of the genre of performance art in its modern form.

Performance art is sometimes said to be located on a map of the arts somewhere between painting and theater, but in my view it is located between theater and whatever dark ritual it was out of which theater evolved and against which it was a defense. There are famous theories, according to which Greek tragedy developed from Dionysiac ritual, where the hero/priest interacted with the celebrant/chorus in such a way that at, and as, the climax of the ritual, the distance between them would be orgiastically blanked out, bringing them together into a single body. Theater was predicated on a kind of moral distance it was the purpose of the original ritual to over-

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come, but the memory of the hope and danger of the earlier practice remained to energize theatrical performance until it degenerated into mere entertainment. Performance art is a response to the separation of artist and community, and is atavistic in seeking to achieve a way of erasing the boundary between art and life. The artist, as if having stepped out of her own images, bodily enters the same space as the audience, and her performance (the best performance artists are for some reason women) is transacted in the hope that something transfigurative and even sublime will take place, raising her and her audience to a higher plane. Its aim is to obliterate the metaphysical distances that separate self from self, and sharing the same physical space seems already to be halfway there. In performance, then, art is restored to its position of magic and danger, though in fact very few artists are quite up to this stunning ambition, and in actual practice, most performance art is ephemeral, sheepish, self-conscious, thin, foolish, scruffy and awful. I once coined the word "disturbation" to describe the ideal moment of performance art. Like its obvious rhyme in English, where mere fantasies culminate in real spasms, disturbatory art seeks real transformations through charged images. And the performer herself is the means of inducing aesthetic climax. It requires great courage.

Cindy Sherman has taken this process one step further: she has re-entered the pictures the performance artist has stepped out of, and done so in such a way as to infuse her images with the promise and threats of the performance artist's real presence. Photography, with its connotations of showing reality, is a marvelous enhancement of disturbation in her case. Indeed, I know philosophers who insist that photography is not a representational art at all, and that in seeing a photograph we see the reality present in the picture rather than a representation of it. (The issue is not whether they are right, but that the condition of photography enables them to hold such a view in the first place.) Sherman's genius consists in the discovery that one can be disturbatory through photography (which is related to but not the same thing as being disturbing through photographing disturbing things). There are images of her to which I return obsessively, again and again, as to a peremptory fantasy. My sense is that this is true of all her admirers. She has found a way of penetrating the consciousness of her viewers, and in this way obliterating the insulating distances between her self and our selves.

March of Dimes
SAVES BABIES

Sherman's work falls into two main groups: "stills," which are black and white, and done mainly from 1977 to 1980; and "color photographs," which she has done ever since, and which have been growing larger and larger. For reasons not altogether aesthetic, I admire the stills more, at least at my present level of understanding her work. In them she is, as it were, Cindy Starlet as The Girl—the female lead in any nondescript grade B film. The Girl, in Barbie doll garments, waiting, watching, wary, is caught at a moment of suspense and implied narrativity, with just enough by way of props—a suitcase, a letter, an empty glass—to identify the nature of her dilemma. The still *dis*tills. It implies the drama it condenses more than the movement it arrests. It was after all the function of the still—in the era before there was film criticism or before people read it and decided on that basis whether to take a film in or let it pass—to provoke, tempt, attract. Under the marquee, on either side of the ticket booth, beneath the lurid poster showing the fragile thing cowering as the shadows near, two or three stills were pinned as comeons, as mute barker's teases, calculated to cause the coins to be laid down, the passer-by to enter the darkness, for the pleasure of seeing sheer fluttering femininity threatened, rescued and redeemed for and through romance. The Arts & Leisure section of *The New York Times* prints stills to much the same purpose.

The Girl is always shown alone, blonde sometimes and sometimes brunette, sometimes a working girl, sometimes a wife, pretty in her apron, threatened in her kitchen—and sometimes she is shown mooning with a letter in her hand or someone's bland photograph on her dressing table, under the mirror in which we see her tender back and the reflection of the space into which she stares, with a man's jacket slung on an empty chair, and a drained glass. Feminine to the essence, soft, vulnerable, fragility her middle name, good, still Daddy's brave girl, cutely independent, determined despite the threats and obstacles, a little heroine, The Girl in the Still condenses the myths that defined life's expectations in Middle American fantasy and have since migrated to the paperback romance. The myths retain to this day an undeniable disturbatory power. In an essay from 1984, printed with the catalogue for the show, Peter Schjeldahl writes ("as a male") of these images as "triggering" (masculine) urges to ravish and/or to protect. Lisa Phillips (as a female) asserts that Sherman's women "have a dignity with which we can identify to acknowledge 'our common terror of degradation and disorientation.'" The stills are in no sense pornographic—but they are what we may call "pornographic functions," variables for which we substitute the values of our own dark sexual fears and yearnings. As concept and execution, it is a brilliant achievement.

Since 1980, perhaps in consequence of growing older and hence no longer easily typecast as The Girl despite the extreme plasticity of her features, but more likely because of a certain restlessness in the face of having found a formula, Sherman has left behind the still in favor of large images and more indeterminate, less culturally anchored mythologies. She achieved celebrity through a series in which she lies or squats within the horizontal cell of the centerfold in a kind of Piranesi darkness. These images are less artificial than those that drew on the easy vocabulary of movies, or they are of an order of artifice that belongs to Baroque painting. The Woman could be having visions or be about to receive stigmata or she could be mad. Her gestures, the deployment of limb and body are operatic and extreme, even if the garments remain often American, 1980s. And she presents herself more directly to the viewer, no longer mediated through Cindy Starlet on location, playing to the camera; she no longer wears the atmosphere of cinematic cliché as a costume to protect her and us. So the myths are more concrete and, so to speak, more possible: these could be real women in real situations. If there is illusion it is no longer the illusion of an illusion, although reality itself has become more fantastic and terrifying. At the same time, these later images—vertical, even square—have become more intertextually implicated in webworks of art-historical allusion. In number 155, she has changed her body for that of Hans Bellmer's creepy Doll, whose buttocks are

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thrust into our face, the cleft between them painted sadist red. In one we see her terrified face reflected, beyond a puddle of vomit and next to strewn pastries, in a pair of sunglasses, like a bulimic *menina*. In number 167, fragments of her stick up through the loam that has been hastily thrown over her hacked body—her lips here, her teeth there, fingers somewhere else—with only her image intact, reflected in the mirror of her makeup case as if it had survived the dismemberment (unless she is reflected as she bends over her victim).

In these later pictures, the transformations and displacements are more daring and more grotesque. Flesh is added, subtracted or rearranged. It is shown eaten by disease, rot and dissolution. Sherman becomes an animal, real or mythological, an urchin, an idiot, several kinds of victim, an idol, a harridan, a corpse, a skeleton, a monster. Limbs are swollen and distended, eyes are about to burst, organs are pocked and reddened, blood fills the cavity of the mouth. In one case she has disappeared, or else she is distributed, as gobbets of flesh, in an immense dish, all wurst and ketchup—a stew for a suburban cannibal. Unless, since I thought I read one of the items as the glans of a penis, she is serving up the flesh of . . . who knows? a lover, a husband, just someone she entrapped?—the pretty young wife in frilled housedress having turned into something ferocious, vengeful, terrible. This degree of savage femaleness has not been seen in art since the Bacchae, and it is for this reason that I question whether my preference for the stills is purely aesthetic. In any case one is grateful for the knowledge that the color photographs are contrived iterations still of her, Cindy Sherman, for the illusions have become unendurably powerful.

It is a very unsettling show. When I left, I saw Sherman, like a figural aftereffect, absolutely everywhere—in the jeans ads on the back of buses, on the television screens in video shops, on the front pages of tabloids, in the ads of *The New Yorker* I glimpsed Calvin Tomkins reading on the number 4 bus headed uptown, and in the mannequins in Madison Avenue storefronts. I recommend that you decompress before hitting the street. There are all your reassuring old favorites from the Whitney's permanent collection on the third floor, and the museum has considerately installed an exhibition of Red Grooms on the fourth. □

MUSIC.

DANIEL WOLFF

Heart Land
Trio

A man in Georgia once proudly described the town he and I were passing through as "pokey, slow and mean." That's a pretty good description of some country music, too, which is why it's a little startling to realize that out of this stubbornly backward field has come one of the strongest traditions of women artists in all of pop. From the pioneering Carter family and the reign of Kitty Wells to Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette, country and western has featured women speaking their minds in a way that puts rock and roll to shame. These days, as the South redefines itself, country is changing and it has turned, as always, to its women for help.

Every couple of years, *The New York Times* pronounces on the health of Nashville's music scene. Most recently, *The Times* decreed a resurgence but, as in much of its reporting, it seemed more interested in fashion than fact. Even given the fine crop of new stars like Dwight Yoakam, The Judds and Randy Travis, Nashville's in trouble. As the memory of rural life disappears, network TV is occupying more and more of the Music City's recording studios.

It's this rural memory, not the reality, that originally formed country and western. The music as we know it—the cowboy hats and rhinestones, the pedal steel guitar—is a product of World War II America. From its outset, the music has mourned urbanization. Even in country's formative days, when Mother Maybelle Carter was perfecting a guitar technique that's still at the heart of the Nashville sound, she was essentially looking backward: preserving ballads and religious tunes from the Victorian era. By the 1950s, when Kitty Wells was dominating the charts with songs like "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," the United States had lost half its prewar farms. And by 1980, city dwellers were casting over half the votes in the Presidential election. In fact, Nashville's own prosperity reflects the demise of the Old South.

Daniel Wolff's essay on David Byrne appears in the summer 1987 Grand Street.

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So, country's audience has always been made up primarily of people not working on but recalling the family farm. The music has voiced the hurt of a region forced to change its values, and one of its central traumas has been the breakup of the traditional family. Our dominant pop sound, rock and roll, long ago accepted this social upheaval. Rock is male music: Madonna is essentially the flip side of David Lee Roth. But country never got over rural women changing from mothers to factory workers. Songs like Loretta Lynn's "Don't Come Home A' Drinkin'" or Jeannie C. Riley's "Harper Valley P.T.A." took their emotional charge from an old-fashioned sense of right and wrong running into modern realities. Women were at the heart of the debate.

The problem is that by now this idealized image of rural America isn't even a memory to most record buyers or, for that matter, to the artists. While Nashville's hopes were buoyed by the Urban Cowboy phenomenon of the 1970s, it was bound to be a brief recovery. To see why, you need only trace country's female tradition from the sentimental power of Wynette's "Stand By Your Man" to The Judds' much more subdued "Grandpa (Tell Me 'Bout the Good Old Days)." The former is driven by a doomed sense of history. "Sometimes it's hard to be a woman," Tammy sings, "but if you love him . . ." and the music swells as if the old values will triumph. But the song's power and sadness come from knowing that the situation won't hold. The Judds' song, on the other hand, coasts along on wistful nostalgia. "Did lovers really fall in love to stay?" they ask. Now that more people divorce than vote, country either has to change with the times or fade away.

The Judds are a leading example of the internal conflict. A mother-daughter team that specializes in close harmony, they have capitalized on good looks, sturdy material (although, like most country acts, they buy rather than write their songs) and especially on Wynonna Judd's strong, sexy voice. Country's present dilemma can be boiled down to the dynamic of Judd hits like "Why Not Me" and "Rockin' With the Rhythm of the Rain," in which Wynonna's rockabilly growl is held in check by her mother's sweet harmonies. In performance, the conflict is even clearer. If Wynonna sounds like a shouter kept down, she moves like a shaker restrained—shielding herself behind her twelve-string and singing note-perfect reproductions of her hits. Unlike Patsy Cline's weeping or Wynette's almost operatic pathos, The Judds have settled for a more homogenized, less demonstrative brand of pop. While they've incorporated some of the more modern sound of rock and roll, The Judds aren't willing to come as far forward as the present. The first single off their latest album, *Heart Land* (RCA/Curb), was a remake of Elvis Presley's "Don't Be Cruel," complete with the original Jordanaires as backup singers. (It's not just coincidental that Dwight Yoakam's latest single is also a Presley cover, "Little Sister.") Though Naomi is a divorced single mother, from their clean-cut image to the brand of rock they cover, The Judds update country only as far as the 1950s. Even with cuts like the simmering "Maybe Your Baby's Got the Blues," *Heart Land* is a retreat. Like her talented contemporaries Reba McEntire and Lacy J. Dalton, Wynonna Judd has a voice that seems always on the verge of cutting loose. It's the hints of resentment and thwarted rebellion in songs like "I Know Where I'm Going" that keep us listening, but finally *Heart Land*'s main goal seems to be to reassure us that times really haven't changed.

More successful in terms of sales, and in fact the most successful album featuring country stars in a long while, *Trio* (Warner Brothers) is a collaboration between Emmylou Harris, Dolly Parton and Linda Ronstadt. In May, when *Trio* had been on the pop charts a couple of months and stood at number 11, the next highest ranking country album was The Judds at number 74. After that, there was no sign of country music until the low 100s. *Trio* combines the talents and audiences of three major women artists to come up with a mainstream crossover hit. You can almost hear Nashville scrambling to find out what happened and how to duplicate it.

According to Harris, *Trio*'s aim was to "keep this music alive," and Ronstadt agrees that *Trio* is "an all-acoustic record featuring traditional material without any attempt to make a commercial record." To see this as more than a little disingenuous you only need to look at the song selection and careers of the three stars. Parton seems to be more honest when she says *Trio* "makes sense and it makes money."

Emmylou Harris is the only one of the three who has remained a "pure" country artist, and she entered the field as a retro and renegade folkie. Like her boyfriend Gram Parsons and the groups he was associated with (The Byrds, The Flying Burrito Brothers), Harris was a hippie who sang country as if to underline its importance to rock and roll. Her albums have usually included revamped pop songs like Simon and Garfunkel's "The Boxer."

Of the three, Parton has the most authentic country roots. Starting as a duet singer with Porter Wagoner, she's

THE JELLYFISH

Moving its translucent mass through the watery
shadow of the dock and then, under the dock (some-
thing so real which now is not) the jellyfish
swam in its slow float while we (I and my daughter,
then just three) ran back and forth predicting that limp
pink gleam and each embodiment it was to seem.

"A jello umbrella!" she began and turned
to me expectantly. Censoring, an after-
birth, broken veins, and Medusa's myth, the monstrous
queen made mortal and mother, I stood in silence
until it ended with a shout as the jelly-
fish glided out. Now months have passed, but surprise:

"The jellyfish was in my eyes!" my daughter calls
while caught between the depth and surface of a dream.
"It bleeded and it singed!" Her conjugations
soon will exact simple irregularities
and tensing will not be verbs, but time's tentacles
untangling her parachute and waving at me.

Susan Kinsolving

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always highlighted her rural Southern background. In the late 1970s, having become one of the top women stars in country, she made a deliberate move to cross over into pop. Her arrangements featured heavier drums and bass and her appearances in movies like *9 To 5* and on late-night talk shows established her as a national figure. While coolly exploiting her image as a big-breasted innocent hick, Parton continued to write some of the most sophisticated and serious pop music around. Even on albums like *Burlap and Satin*, which is too often overwhelmed by the cartoony, country bumpkin persona, there are gems like "Appalachian Memories" and "A Gamble Either Way," songs that not only reflect the rural Southern exodus but examine its effects from a woman's perspective.

If Ronstadt, on the other hand, is a member of the country family, it's only as an adopted sister. While early albums like *Hand Sown . . . Home Grown* showed country's influence on her musical beginnings in Arizona, Ronstadt has always been primarily a pop diva. Many of her hits were covers of early rock or country tunes, updated and often neutralized by slick Los Angeles arrangements. In this way, Ronstadt is the prototype of the country sound of the 1980s. Her ability to appropriate styles has been confirmed in the last few years, during which she's gone from Broadway to a series of recordings with Nelson Riddle, turning whatever she touches into sugar.

Trio is a pop hit because its country stars are all attuned to pop values and because two of the three already had large pop audiences. How near the record's prime strategy is to *Heart Land*'s can be illustrated by how the two albums close: *Trio* with "Farther Along" and *Heart Land* with an almost identically arranged country hymn, "The Sweetest Gift." *Trio*'s high points are Parton's "Wildflowers" and the cover of Jimmie Rodgers's "Hobo's Meditation," but it avoids the commercial dead-end of traditional acoustic music by including cuts like "To Know Him Is To Love Him" (an old Phil Spector tune) and "Telling Me Lies" (a contemporary art song by Linda Thompson). From Mark O'Connor's tasteful fiddle playing to the women's often predictable harmony singing, *Trio* also aims to reassure. The biting edge of Parton's best work is notably absent, and the tradition of trying to cope with change that can be found in Wells's "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" or Lynn's "The Pill" is melted into a middle-of-the-road appeal to the way we were.

The evasiveness of *Trio* and *Heart Land* can be seen in the way both avoid narrative. Whether it was a woman spurned or the dangers of bright lights and big city, country always tried to tell the story. It's that tradition that has drawn lyric writers to Nashville even when the audience was shrinking. People like Steve Earle, though acclaimed by rock critics and fans, insist they're country because they write "story" songs. Inheritors of the folk tradition, like Steve Forbert, Jesse Winchester and Wendy Waldman, have ended up writing for country stars. And Nashville has accepted newcomers like Lyle Lovett and Nanci Griffith. Griffith's recent album, *The Last of the True Believers* (Rounder), is on a mostly folk label. While she owes a bigger debt to Joni Mitchell than Mother Maybelle Carter, Griffith is being hailed as a sign of hope in Nashville, and her lilting "Love at the Five & Dime" was a major country hit for Kathy Mattea. By its title alone, *The Last of the True Believers* seems to admit that its folk-rock sound, like "pure" country, is a near-extinct species. But by allowing Griffith and her like in, Nashville offers the possibility of once again telling the story.

Though *Trio* and *Heart Land* show no sign of it, the South is still the poorest region in the United States. Nonunion labor prevails, and 40 percent of all manufacturing work is in low-growth, low-wage industries. The complaint which helped fuel country music—of a defeated, denigrated, unheard section of the population—remains today. In the last decade, Nashville has pretty much followed the Republican strategy for wooing the new South: appeal to what was, pay no mind to what is and when in doubt, cover up. But finally, by ignoring the diversity of its audience, that approach has trapped country music. While the percentage of black voters in the South is twenty times greater than it was forty years ago, Charley Pride remains the token black in Nashville; Johnny Rodriguez, the lone Hispanic star. If country wants to remain true to itself and expand its audience, it might consider its tradition of speaking for those largely unheard in the rest of pop, and even with Madonna, Tina Turner and Heart, that includes women. As Nanci Griffith sings, "I need more than a whisper." Country's response should echo Wynonna Judd's "Turn it loose." □

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D	■	A	■	C	■	S	■	S	■	R	■	A	■	M
A	P	R	!	O	R	I	■	C	O	D	E	T	T	A
M	■	T	■	R	■	A	■	O	■	E	■	T	■	T
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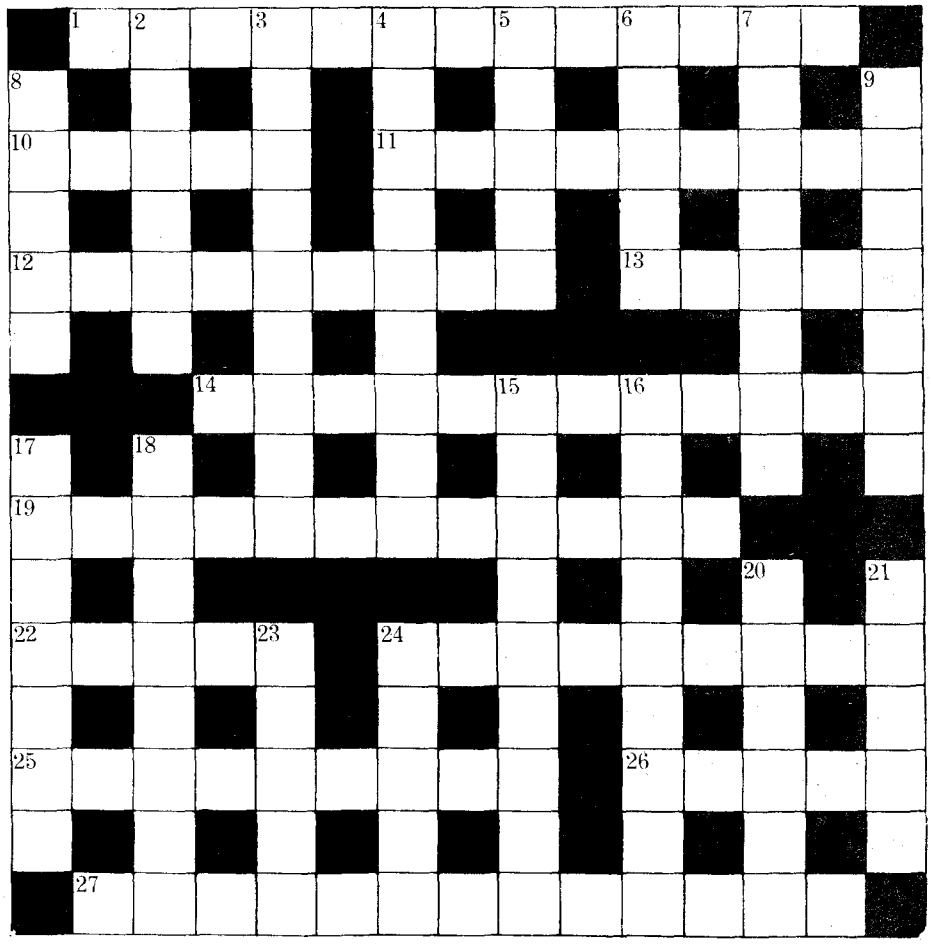
Crossword Puzzle No. 2160

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Fish bait at a person's front door? (That's one way to be ingratiating!) (4,4,3,2)
10 Oration which has no beginning or end—at least in proportion. (5)
11 and 17 down No bad air put out here, obviously! (4,5,7)
12 Fifty struggled for victory around it, but it's all over now! (9)
13 One of two in case of controversy. (Coca's involved with him.) (5)
14 An agreeable time? (When some reach it, they get married.) (3,2,7)
19 Oliver, as well as a music hall act—a rather evasive way to behave. (5,3,4)
22 Worn out, as cars must be. (5)
24 Not where they used to hang up notices for payment. (It's not expenses that they prune!) (9)
25 What Beethoven and Mozart made are not the sort the wolf might make. (9)
26 The ego association or what might be written about it. (5)
27 Its calling is not official, usually—however it might imply a bonanza, if well connected. (7,6)

DOWN

2 Is it I? Not me? Not exactly, but not late! (2,4)
3 Take a little extra work to produce such a sonata? (9)
4 Evening dress? Not exactly! (9)
5 One of the things losers were put to in the old days is now part of a crossword puzzle. (5)
6 The highest points are ones that have a large number inside. (5)
7 Under the rose, not out with what might be hard to keep. (2,6)
8 Sometimes a pair might suggest a second-class running in support of something. (5)
9 Not direct current expenses, as one meets things unexpectedly. (7)
15 Acceleration of chemical change. (One might find it a classy change!) (9)
16 The little bear, properly speaking, has this. (6,4)
17 See 11 across
18 The Princess travels around a foreign country with the old P.M., obviously. (8)
20 What you might be missing if you haven't a red cent? (Get up all right, and attack like a bird!) (6)
21 Used to be a leading man in the theater. (5)
23 Romantics might like to be, if not considered passé. (5)
24 Do they get "be" and "are" confused at this educational institution? (5)

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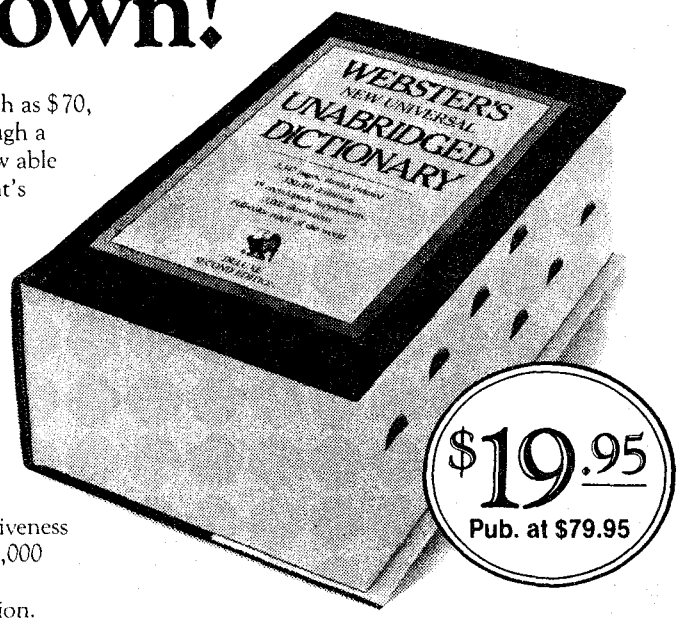

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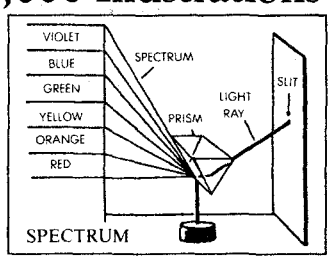

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